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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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## BJP leaders, farmers detained during march to Suvarna Soudha

Police detain BJP leaders and farmers in Belagavi on Tuesday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

**BELAGAVI, 9 DEC**

Several protesters, including Karnataka BJP President BY Vijayendra, were detained on Tuesday as they, along with a large contingent of farmers, marched towards the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha to protest what they called the Congress government's "anti-farmer policies".

A massive crowd had assembled at Malini City Grounds, led by Vijayendra, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly; R Ashoka, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council; Chalavadhi Narayanaswamy; and other MLAs, MLCs, and senior party leaders. The march coincided with the 10-day Winter Session of the Karnataka Legislature, which began on 8 December.

- Karnataka recorded 2,422 farmer suicides in just 2.5 years, accounting for 22.5 per cent of all such cases in India, making it the second-highest, Ashoka said.

Protesters raised slogans accusing the Siddaramaiah-led government of ignoring farmers' issues. Vijayendra alleged internal conflicts within Congress had resulted in "policy paralysis", preventing timely action on sugarcane and maize farmers' concerns. He criticised the state for offering only Rs 50 per tonne for sugarcane, despite Karnataka earning over Rs 35,000 crore annually from the crop, and highlighted that maize growers' demands for procurement centres remain unmet.

Narayanaswamy echoed the concerns, saying compensation for lost crops has yet to reach farmers, leaving many struggling. He argued that merely writing to the Centre is insufficient, urging the government to personally engage with MPs and Opposition leaders.

BJP also accused the state of failing to prevent farmers from being forced to sell produce to middlemen at distress prices, calling the government's response "inadequate and neglectful". Police detained the protesters and took them away in vans amid heavy security deployment.

"There have been floods in North Karnataka. No relief work has been carried out. We had given a notice for an adjournment motion," Opposition Lead R Ashoka said. *—PTI*

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## Census 2027 to go digital with apps and web portal

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

The Centre on Tuesday told the Lok Sabha that the 2027 Census will be conducted digitally for the first time. Responding to SP MP Sanatan Pandey, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said data will be collected through mobile applications, while citizens will also have the option of self-enumeration via a dedicated portal. He clarified that individuals will be counted at the location where they are found during enumeration, with migration details, place of birth, last residence, duration of stay and reasons for migration, also recorded. The Census questionnaire will be notified in advance. ***—ANI***

## NIA arrests 8th accused in Red Fort blast

**NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, 9 DEC**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday made its eighth arrest in the probe into last month's car blast near Delhi's Red Fort. Officials said the agency detained Dr Bilal Naseer Malla of Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir, from the national capital. According to an NIA spokesperson, Bilal was a key conspirator in the 10 November explosion that killed 11 people and left several others injured. The agency alleged that he knowingly harboured the deceased accused Umar Un Nabi, providing him logistical support and later destroying evidence linked to the attack. In a parallel development, NIA teams carried out searches in Anantnag and Kulgam districts earlier in the day.***—PTI***

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## Man detained with gun at Vijay's rally

**PUDUCHERRY, 9 DEC**

A man carrying a handgun was detained at actor Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) rally on Tuesday after attempting to enter the restricted event at the Uppalam Expo Ground. Police, who were thoroughly frisking attendees, said the man claimed to be a personal security officer with a licensed revolver but refused to disclose his identity or employer. This was TVK's first rally since the Karur stampede in September that killed 41 people. The Tamil Nadu government had initially denied permission before capping attendance at 5,000, allowing entry only through QR codes. Despite this, large crowds gathered, with some climbing trees for a view. Around 1,500 police personnel were deployed. ***—PTI***

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## In LS, RaGa calls vote theft biggest anti-national act

### BJP alleges Indira Gandhi won Raebareli via vote theft

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

In a blistering attack during a Lok Sabha debate on election reforms, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday accused the BJP of committing the "biggest anti-national act" by engaging in "vote chori" in collusion with the Election Commission (EC). He alleged that the ruling party was capturing institutions and "destroying the idea of India".

Participating in the discussion, Gandhi posed questions that he said showed the EC was being "directed and used" by the government. He criticised the 2023 law granting immunity to the Chief Election Commissioner and other commissioners, saying the Opposition would overturn it when in power. Gandhi also questioned the removal of the Chief Justice of India from the selection panel and asked why the prime minister and home minister were "so keen" to choose election commissioners.

He accused the government of permitting the destruction of CCTV footage 45 days after polling and cited alleged duplication in voter lists, claiming the Haryana election was "stolen". He said similar discrepancies were visible in Bihar, where 1.2 lakh duplicate photos were found after roll revision.

Gandhi warned election commissioners that the law would not protect them from accountability, adding that institutions born from the vote were being "captured" by RSS.

Responding to his remarks, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey countered that EVMs were introduced by Rajiv Gandhi in 1987. He rejected allegations of collusion and said the Congress itself had historically rewarded EC officials. BJP flayed Rahul saying he indulges in drama and resorts to lying, instead of "constructively" assisting in the selection of officials for the poll panel. Intervening in the debate, Meghwal accused the Congress of engaging in 'vote chori' (vote theft) since the first Lok Sabha elections, including rigging elections to ensure the defeat of B R Ambedkar. He also noted that during the Raebareli elections, former prime minister Indira Gandhi faced charges of electoral malpractice, which he called 'vote chori'. *—PTI*

**RAHUL'S DEMANDS**

Rahul asked the govt to work on electoral reforms and made four demands:

1. Give a machine -readable voter list to all parties one month before elections.
2. Take back the law that allows the destruction of CCTV footage.
3. Also, tell us what the architecture of the EVM (electronic voting machine) is. Give us access to the EVM. Let our experts see what is inside the EVMs. Till today, we have not had access to the EVM.
4. Change the law that allows the election commissioner to get away with whatever he wants to do.

**Division of VANDE MATARAM led to partition: Shah**

Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday told the Rajya Sabha that the division of Vande Mataram marked the start of "appeasement politics" that ultimately led to India's partition. Criticising the Opposition for linking the debate on the national song's 150 years to the upcoming West Bengal elections, he accused the Congress of questioning the need for the discussion. Shah also alleged that Jawaharlal Nehru "divided" the poem in 1937 by limiting it to two stanzas, prompting protests from Opposition benches. He said many believe partition would not have occurred had Vande Mataram not been "divided".

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## Govt cuts Indigo flights by 10%

**NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, 9 DEC**

India's largest airline, IndiGo, continued to face turbulence on Tuesday as flight delays and cancellations stretched into an eighth straight day, prompting the Civil Aviation Ministry to order a 10 per cent cut in operations while maintaining coverage of all destinations.

Earlier, the aviation regulator DGCA directed a 5 per cent reduction in IndiGo's winter flight schedule, saying the carrier, which operates over 2,200 flights daily and controls more than 60 per cent of the domestic market, had failed to demonstrate the ability to run its expanded winter schedule efficiently. More than 4,000 flights have been cancelled since 2 December, leaving tens of thousands stranded and major airports in Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai severely affected.

The DGCA, which has issued show-cause notices to IndiGo's senior leadership and launched a four-member probe panel, said the disruptions were aggravated by aggressive scheduling, new safety regulations mandating higher pilot rest, reduced night operations, and congestion. The regulator has ordered IndiGo to avoid single-flight sectors and revise its winter schedule by Wednesday.

IndiGo restored 1,800 flights by Monday and is operating to all 138 destinations, he said. *—PTI*

> **It is our responsibility to ensure that no citizen of India faces any hardship from the government simply because they are Indian citizens. Rules and regulations are good... but they should be used to improve the system, not harass the public**
>
> —Narendra Modi, PM on Indigo crisis

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## Interpol Blue Notice issued against Goa club owners

**PANAJI, 9 DEC**

The Interpol has issued a Blue Notice against Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra, the owners of a Goa nightclub where a massive blaze has claimed 25 lives, to track their whereabouts, officials said on Tuesday. The duo reportedly fled to Phuket, Thailand, mere hours after the incident, prompting Goa Police to expedite their efforts to locate the fugitives.

\ While the Blue Notice aims to gather information regarding the fugitives, a Red Notice, which demands their detention, can only be issued after a charge sheet is filed.

Additionally, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has ordered the demolition of the illegal 'Romeo Lane' beach shack at Vagator, owned by the Luthra brothers, which is built on government land. This shack becomes the third of their properties to face action since the tragedy. *—PTI*

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## Don threatens tariffs on India over 'rice dumping'

**NEW YORK, 9 DEC**

US President Donald Trump has warned that India "should not be dumping rice" into the American market and vowed to "take care of it", asserting that tariffs would resolve the issue "in one day".

Speaking at a White House roundtable with farming representatives, alongside Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, Trump announced USD 12 billion in federal aid for farmers.

Meryl Kennedy of Louisiana-based Kennedy Rice Mill told Trump that US rice producers were "really struggling" as India, Thailand and China were "dumping" rice into the US. She said the trend pre-dated Trump but had worsened, adding that a WTO case was already underway against India.

Trump questioned why India was "allowed" to do so and directed Bessent to note the countries involved. Bessent said the US was still negotiating a trade deal with India. Trump insisted tariffs would fix the issue swiftly. India, the world's largest rice producer and top exporter, shipped about 2.34 lakh tonnes of rice to the US in 2024. *—PTI*

## K'TAKA HC RECALLS ITS ORDER STAYING MENSTRUAL LEAVES

**BENGALURU, 9 DEC**

The Karnataka High Court recalled its interim order on menstrual leaves just hours after passing it on Tuesday. The High Court had stayed the State government's notification mandating one day of paid menstrual leave a month for working women. However, the court later recalled its stay order and adjourned the matter to Wednesday to hear the State government's arguments.

On 2 December, the government ordered one day of menstrual leave per month for female State employees.

The stay was granted by Justice Jyoti M on a petition by the Bangalore Hotels' Association and Avirata AFL Connectivity Systems, who argued the Karnataka government failed to consult them before issuing the order.

- On 2 December, govt ordered one day of menstrual leave per month for employees.

The menstrual leave is meant for women working in all industries registered under the Factories Act, 1948, Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961, Plantation Workers Act, 1951, Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, and Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961. *—PTI*

**LARGEST INVESTMENT IN ASIA**

## *Microsoft to invest $1.58L cr in India*

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

Microsoft will invest Rs 1.58 lakh crore (USD 17.5 billion) in India between 2026 and 2029 to expand cloud capacity, build sovereign digital infrastructure, and accelerate AI adoption at scale, CEO Satya Nadella announced after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The commitment, Microsoft's largest in Asia, comes in addition to the USD 3 billion pledged earlier this year.

This will enable 22,000 jobs across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Gurugram, Noida and other cities

The investment focuses on three pillars — scale, skills, and sovereignty — aimed at supporting India's ambition to become a global AI leader. At the core of the expansion is the upcoming India South Central hyperscale cloud region in Hyderabad, set to go live mid-2026. It will be Microsoft's largest such region in India, comprising three availability zones. The company will also expand existing data-centre regions in Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella meets PM Narendra Modi in Delhi

Microsoft will integrate advanced AI tools into the Ministry of Labour's e-Shram and National Career Service platforms, aiming to benefit more than 310 million informal workers through multilingual access, AI-assisted job matching, predictive analytics and automated resumé tools. The tech giant is also doubling its skilling target to train 20 million Indians in AI by 2030. *—Salar News*

## Lingayats to mark 10 December as 'Oppression Day'

**HAVERI, 9 DEC**

Kudalasangama Panchamasali Peetha seer Basavajaya Mrityunjaya Swami has declared 10 December as "Oppression Day" to protest against reported police actions inflicted upon Lingayat Panchamasalis during last year's reservation agitation. Speaking to the media, the seer referred to the events of 10 December, 2023, when peaceful protests were held in Belagavi demanding inclusion in the 2A reservation category. He stated, "Clashes triggered by miscreants led to stone-pelting and injuries. Police resorted to lathi-charge, leaving several innocent protesters hurt." In response, a silent march is planned in Belagavi on Wednesday at 10 am, commencing from Gandhi Bhavan, where participants will wear black cloth across their mouths and left arms while carrying the Kittur Rani Chennamma flag in their right hand. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

## IndiGo cancels 121 flights from Bengaluru

**MUMBAI, 9 DEC**

IndiGo cancelled around 180 flights from Bengaluru and Hyderabad on Tuesday, as the disruption in the crisis-hit airline continues into its eighth consecutive day. Presently, the number of cancellations at Bengaluru Airport stands at 121, of which 58 are arrivals and 63 departures. The Rahul Bhatia-controlled airline operates over 2,200 flights per day from 90-odd domestic destinations and 40-plus abroad destinations. The Gurugram-based carrier, which commands over 65 per cent of India's total domestic traffic, had cancelled over 560 flights from six metro airports alone on Monday. *—PTI*

## DKS responds to Yathindra's leadership barb

**BELAGAVI, 9 DEC**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has expressed confusion over remarks made by Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah regarding leadership stability within the State. Yathindra reportedly stated on Monday that there was "no question" of a leadership change and expressed his belief that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would serve his full five-year term in the office. Shivakumar insisted that there are no differences between him and Siddaramaiah, stating, "Everything is fine... I have not understood what he (Yathindra) has said. I will speak to him." Speculation concerning a potential leadership change grew following the Congress government surpassing the halfway mark of its term. *—PTI*

## Man held for sending Top Cop threatening emails

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

A 22-year-old web developer in south Delhi's Saket area has been arrested for allegedly sending terror-linked threat emails to the commissioners of police in Bengaluru and Delhi as part of an online vendetta against a man, an official said on Tuesday. The accused, Abhay Shee, allegedly targeted the victim, Mohit, after a dispute involving a woman. Shee allegedly created multiple fake email IDs resembling the victim's identity, sent threat mails claiming affiliation with a banned organisation, and generated fabricated cyber complaints in the victim's name. On 7 December, Delhi Police received a threat email demanding money. Police later found that on 30 November, a similar threat warning of bomb attacks in Bengaluru had been sent to the Bengaluru Police Commissioner's official email. *—PTI*

# In Assembly, Cong bats for Tipu Jayanthi

## Cong MLA says govt should organise it; BJP asks Cong to celebrate Pak Independence Day

**BELAGAVI, 9 DEC**

The row of Tipu Jayanthi has reignited in the State with a ruling Congress MLA Shivanand Kashappanavar, deciding to move a calling attention motion in the Karnataka Assembly to organise the birth anniversary of the 18th century Mysuru ruler.

During his previous tenure as Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah had started the tradition and then put a brake on it following widespread protests, including a violent one in Kodagu, where a man was killed in police firing.

After the protest, Tipu's birth anniversary was celebrated as a low-key affair. Gradually, it was put on hold.

Now the Hungund MLA has once again raked it up. Kashappanavar wants the State to sponsor Tipu Jayanthi, triggering a strong reaction from the Opposition BJP, which has said that it will vehemently protest it.

Kashappanavar told press that he has moved a proposal to organise Tipu Jayanti. We have to wait for the state government's response. His contention is that the BJP strongman B S Yediyurappa himself had put up Tipu's attire and celebrated it. "They celebrated it when they needed it. Now they don't want it," the Congress MLA said.

The State government unveiled the world's second-largest khadi national flag at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, in Belagavi on Tuesday *PHOTO: SALAR*

Reacting to the move, Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka told reporters, "Let them celebrate Tipu Jayanthi, Osama bin Laden's birth anniversary and Pakistan's Independence Day. It's their government. People will know who they favour."

Waqf and Housing Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan told press that he has been organising Tipu Jayanthi. "Tipu followers across the country have been organising it. We too organised it last month".

A section of people from Kodagu had opposed Tipu Jayanthi, saying that Tipu had killed 16,000 Kodavas in a single day. The Mandyam Iyengars stopped celebrating Deepavali as Tipu's army had allegedly butchered 600 of them over suspicion that one of them tipped off the British forces. *—PTI*

**518 RSS marches took place in the State this year: HM**

## State loses Rs 5,474 crore to cyber frauds in 3yrs: Parameshwara

Over the last three years, people in the State have lost Rs 5,474 crore to cyber frauds, of which the police have managed to recover Rs 627 crore so far, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Tuesday in response to a question from Sakleshpur BJP MLA Cement Manju. "In the last four years, about 52,000 cyber frauds have taken place in Karnataka, and the numbers are rising day by day," Parameshwara said. In the 2023, there were 22,000 cyber fraud cases filed, while 2024 saw 22,400 cases. He said cyber fraud cases dropped to roughly 13,000 following government measures in 2025, with losses exceeding Rs 2,000 crore and recoveries of Rs 125 crore so far.

## I'm the real leader of Oppn: Ex-BJP leader Yatnal

Senior MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, who has been expelled from the BJP claimed that he was the "real leader of Opposition", and requested the Speaker to allot him a seat next to the Deputy Speaker. Yatnal said this as he was making a request to the Chair, to make an arrangement for him and two other MLAs – who are now un-attached members – to be seated on the front row, considering their seniority. Yatnal, ST Somashekar and A Shivaram Hebbar were shifted to back benches after they were expelled from the BJP earlier this year.

## Amazon, Swiggy are delivering liquor illegally: DKS

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that delivery platforms like Amazon and Swiggy were unofficially and illegally delivering liquor to people's homes, while adding that people should be allowed to keep more than seven-eight bottles of alcohol in their house. "It's available there but not officially... I've heard about it in several places." However, rather than advocating for a crackdown, he said that the excise laws should be relaxed, saying that illegal liquor outlets, especially along the coastal belt, should be granted licences.

## Helicopters for VIPs will be rented, not purchased, says DyCM

The Karnataka government has decided to avail high-quality helicopter and special aircraft services on rental basis for the travel needs of VIPs during emergency and special situations, DyCM DK Shivakumar said on Tuesday after a meeting at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha. Shivakumar said that the government had planned to ask HAL to manufacture services, but they needed more time. He said Union Minister Rajnath Singh also saw the HAL helicopters during the airshow. "We will hold another meeting next Monday or Tuesday," the DyCM added, saying choppers would be booked on an hourly basis.

# Black soldier flies may soon compost City's garbage

**BELAGAVI, 9 DEC**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday told the Assembly that he wants to introduce an innovative method in composting of garbage involving an insect called 'black soldier fly' to tackle the garbage issue in the City.

"I compliment those from Mangaluru, they have started a new project, the Prime Minister has also spoken on this. The insect, named black soldier fly, feeds on garbage and helps with composting. I want to introduce it in Bengaluru," Shivakumar said while replying to a question raised by Doddaballapur BJP MLA Dheeraj Muniraju who opposed the government's plan to restart a closed waste processing plant in his constituency, during the Question Hour.

Shivakumar added, "The experimental project has been done well in Mangaluru.....I will even be open to visiting Mangaluru to see what is going on in this regard. I'm open to all suggestions, whatever you give."

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar addresses the Assembly as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah looks on, in Belagavi on Tuesday *PHOTO: SALAR*

Shivakumar said that the government has identified two locations -- north and south -- where waste processing plants will come up to process the garbage that is gathered Greater Bengaluru Authority area.

In the north, 134 acres at Doddabelavangala in Doddaballapur, where the now-defunct Terrafirma plant is located, have been identified, while in the south, 84 acres in Gollahalli near Uttarahalli have been identified.

Pointing out that the City generates 8,000 tonnes of waste and questioning where should it be disposed, he said, "The latest technology has come", adding that he wants to decimate the "garbage mafia" in the City. "We are opening a similar unit in Kanakapura and Bidadi too. Convince people that there is no issue with these units," Shivakumar told the Opposition.

*—Salar News with Agencies*

# CM asks PM to fix MSP procurement for toor dal

**BENGALURU, 9 DEC**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to immediately approve MSP procurement of toor dal through two central agencies, and ensure immediate operational deployment across the State's major procurement centres before peak arrivals begin.

In a letter to Modi dated 8 December and shared with the media on Tuesday, Siddaramaiah recalled that the State Karnataka has already submitted a formal proposal seeking immediate approval for MSP-based procurement of toor dal through National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Limited (NCCF).

"However, we are still awaiting a response from the Union Government," he stated.

Siddaramaiah pointed out that during the current Kharif season (2025-26), toor dal has been sown across approximately 16.80 lakh hectares in the State, with an expected production of over 12.60 lakh metric tonnes.

"The crop represents the backbone of income for farmers across major growing districts including Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Bidar, Raichur, Vijayapura, Koppal, Belagavi, Ballari, Vijayanagara, Bagalkote, Kolar, Chikkaballapura and Chitradurga, regions," he stated.

At present, the modal market prices are ranging between Rs 5,830 and Rs 6,700 per quintal, while the MSP announced for toor dal for 2025-26 stands at nearly 28,000 per quintal, he said.

Peak arrivals are expected between December 2025 and January 2026, but the Union Government will open the procurement centres only in February and March.

"It is evident that farmers are staring at a serious income shock, unless timely and decisive intervention is undertaken by the Union government," the CM stated. "Every day of delay is pushing Karnataka's farmers closer to distress sales, debt traps and irreversible financial damage." *—PTI*

**'DOUBLE OF GUARANTEE BUDGET'**

# Rs 6.15L crore worth of loans written off by PM? CM slams BJP

**BENGALURU, 9 DEC**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah flayed Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the Union Finance Ministry revealed in the Lok Sabha that the Centre had written off Rs 6,15,647 crore worth loans in five years.

That's "an average of Rs 1,23,129 crore per year!" Siddaramaiah wrote on X, saying it was double the annual expenditure of Karnataka's guarantee schemes.

Siddaramaiah said that it was clear that the Centre was anti-people and pro-elite.

"This is a betrayal of Indians who pay taxes. What share of the loan waiver amount will the PM get?" he said. He asked how many of the loans waived off belonged to the companies of Modi's close friends.

Opposition Leader R Ashoka, however said that the problem began with the previous UPA government and said Siddaramaiah didn't know the difference between a write off and a waiver. *—Salar News*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Prime Minister Narendra Modi *PHOTO: PTI*

**MINISTER WANTS CID PROBE**

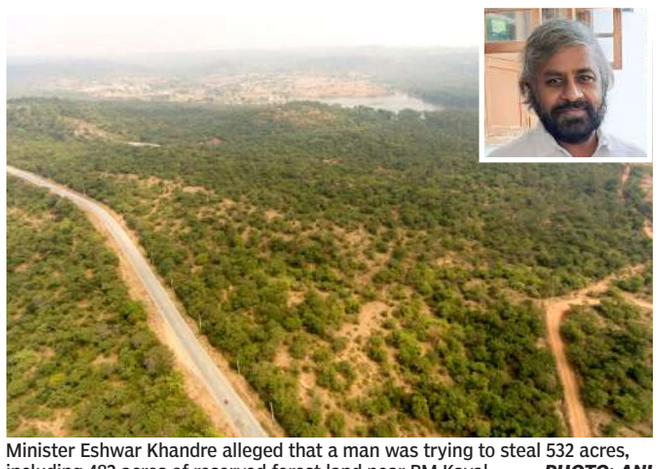
# *'Conspiracy to grab 532 acres of forest land'*

**BELAGAVI, 9 DEC**

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre has written to the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seeking a CID probe into a "conspiracy" to grab 532 acres of forest and government land.

According to Khandre, a man identified as MB Nemanna Gowda alias MB Manmath had filed a writ petition in the High Court and secured an order directing that records for 532 acres -- including 482 acres of reserved forest land near BM Kaval in Kengeri, Bengaluru -- be transferred to his name within three months.

The Minister said the government learnt of the development only at the last moment, stating that "until a day before the completion of the 90-day deadline, the government's Additional Government Advocate Yoganna did not convey this information either to the government or to the forest department."



Minister Eshwar Khandre alleged that a man was trying to steal 532 acres, including 482 acres of reserved forest land near BM Kaval *PHOTO: ANI*

The land, valued at nearly Rs 25,000 crore, would have been lost had the department not been alerted in the eleventh hour, Khandre alleged. He convened an urgent meeting and instructed officials to file an appeal. He added that Manmath had previously attempted to claim government land by producing "fake and false documents".

The Minister said the then Chikkamagaluru Sub-Divisional Officer Debjeet Kumar had, in an order dated 25 September, 2024, directed that a criminal case be registered against Manmath.

After the BM Kaval issue surfaced, Khandre said he instructed officials to lodge a complaint with the Chikkamagaluru police.

"Though the Moodigere Circle Inspector received the complaint on November 28, 2025, no FIR has been registered so far," Khandre said in a statement and described the delay as "suspicious".

Khandre said it appeared prima facie that some officials and the Additional Government Advocate had directly or indirectly aided those attempting to grab land worth thousands of crores.

He urged the Chief Minister to form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) or hand over the matter to the CID for a comprehensive probe and for action against erring officials. Khandre also called for action against the Assistant Conservator of Forests. *—PTI*

# Family claims negligence over stillbirth at YIMS hosp

**YADGIR, 9 DEC**

After a baby boy died during childbirth in Yadgir, the grieving family sat outside the government hospital in protest, alleging that the institution denied the pregnant mother treatment.

The family said that they brought the pregnant mother, Neelabai, from Balichakra Tanda in Yadgir taluk, to the government YIMS Mother and Child Hospital when she experienced labour pains. However, the hospital neither provided her a bed nor gave her treatment.

Neelabai slept on the hospital floor the entire day on Saturday, the family alleged.

However, when she began to bleed heavily, the doctors performed a surgery to deliver the baby. They had initially said a normal delivery would be fine, but on early Sunday decided to perform a C-section surgery. Unfortunately, they found that the baby had already died in the womb.

The family alleged that medical negligence had led to the baby's death and filed an official complaint.

However, the hospital presented a different account. Yadgir District Surgeon Dr Rizwana told Salar News, "The delivery date had been given as 26 November. But, the family postponed."

Dr Rizwana said that the baby's heartbeat had stopped before the C-section was even performed by Dr Nagashree.

President of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Bengaluru, Shashidhar S Kosambe, told Salar News that the body has taken suo motu cognizance. *—Salar News*

The family protests outside the YIMS building *PHOTO: SALAR*

## Kuki outfits condemn Meitei MLA's camp visit

IMPHAL/ CHURACHANDPUR, 9 DEC

Kuki outfits condemned BJP MLA Yumnam Khemchand Singh's visit to a Manipur relief camp, calling it a "calculated political exercise". Singh, a Meitei leader and former assembly speaker, visited a Kuki relief camp in Ukhrul on Monday, marking the first cross-community visit since ethnic violence erupted in May 2023. Kuki-Zo Council (KZC). The council warned that unannounced visits could spark misunderstandings or unwanted confrontations, saying Meiteis have always travelled freely to Ukhrul and other Kaccha Naga-dominated areas. The KZC condemned the "insincere" act and cautioned against visiting Kuki-Zo areas or relief centres without prior notice to community leaders. —*PTI*

# 'Vande Mataram row not linked to WB polls'

## HM says Cong treating debate as political ploy

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday dismissed Opposition allegations that the government's decision to hold a debate on 'Vande Mataram' was aimed at influencing the West Bengal Assembly elections next year.

"Some people are saying 'Vande Mataram' is being discussed because elections are coming in West Bengal... They are trying to reduce its importance by linking it with Bengal polls," he said in the Rajya Sabha.

Initiating the debate, Shah described 'Vande Mataram' as the "mantra" that awakened India's cultural nationalism, asserting that the song was as significant today as during the freedom struggle, and would remain vital in advancing the goal of Viksit Bharat.

He accused Congress of treating the debate as a political tac-tic, adding that the government had "nothing to hide" and was ready to discuss any issue as long as Parliament functioned without disruption.

Shah criticised the absence of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra during Monday's debate in the Lok Sabha, and alleged that several Opposition members did not accord due respect to the national song when sung in Parliament.

He claimed that opposition towards Vande Mataram was "in the blood of Congress leader-ship", dating back to Jawaharlal Nehru. —*PTI*

Union Home Minister Amit Shah PHOTO: PTI

PARLIAMENT MONSOON SESSION DAY 7

> **Linking patriotism to any single religion or identity is against constitutional principles and will increase social division**
>
> -Asaduddin Owaisi, AIMIM leader

# 'Tagore adviced Cong on song stanzas'

## Congress says Nehru & Bose worked together

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

The Congress on Tuesday cited historian Sugata Bose's remarks that it was on Rabindranath Tagore's advice that the party decided in 1937 that only the first part of "Vande Mataram" would be sung at national meetings, and said these comments "further expose" Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh shared on X a video clip in which Sugata Bose is talking about the relations between Subhas Chandra Bose and India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

"Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru worked very closely at the time of the All India Congress Committee's meeting in Calcutta in October-November of 1937. At that time both of them consulted Rabindranath Tagore on a very sensitive subject and that was the song Vande Mataram," Sugata Bose said in the video.

"It was on Rabindranath's advice that the Congress decided at this AICC meeting that from now on, at national meetings only the first part of the song, which is a beautiful evocation of the national splendour of our country, would be performed," the historian said.

Additionally, Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday said the true homage to Bharat Mata will only be when Parliament discusses and resolves the issues of common people, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of holding a discussion on Vande Mataram while keeping Bengal elections in mind. He also accused the ruling dispensation of holding the discussion to divert the people's attention from the real challenges the country faces. —*PTI*

Congress General Secretary Communications Jairam Ramesh PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: ANI

## Wishes pour in as Sonia Gandhi turns 79

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Birthday wishes poured in for former Congress president Sonia Gandhi as she turned 79 on Tuesday, with the Congress saying her visionary leadership transformed India through landmark rights-based laws such as MGNREGA and the National Food Security Act. Ghandhi was notably greeted by Prime Minister Modi, in a post on X, "Birthday greetings to Sonia Gandhi Ji. May she be blessed with a long life and good health". The high-profile well-wishes continued, including Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin. Gandhi. The longest serving Congress president has taken a back seat from active politics due to health reasons. —*PTI*

## Mizoram's Hung verdict in Lai council, MNF ahead

AIZAWL, DEC 9

The elections to the Lai Autonomous District Council in Mizoram resulted in a hung house on Tuesday, with the opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) emerging as the single largest party by securing eight of the 25 elected seats, officials said. The Congress won seven seats, while the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) managed six. The BJP won two seats, and two Independent candidates were also elected. A minimum of 13 seats is required for a majority in the council. The polls, held on 3 December, recorded a turnout of nearly 84 per cent. Only the ZPM contested all 25 seats, while the MNF fielded candidates in 20 constituencies, Congress in 14 and BJP in 10. —*PTI*

## Shiv Sena, BJP unite for Mumbai municipal polls

MUMBAI, DEC 9

After days of internal friction, the BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena have agreed to contest Maharashtra's upcoming municipal corporation elections, including those in Mumbai and Thane, together as part of the Mahayuti alliance, Sena sources said on Tuesday. The decision was finalised during a late-night meeting on Monday between Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. The dates for the civic polls are yet to be declared. Additionally, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve on Tuesday posted a video on social media, purportedly showing an MLA of the rival Sena on a video call with another person who is sitting amid bundles of cash. Many leaders claimed these were morphed videos made with the help of AI. —*PTI*

## 'Make Vande Mataram must in schools'

Rajya Sabha nominated MP Sudha Murty urged the government to make it compulsory to sing the national song 'Vande Mataram' in schools. Describing India as a quilt where each state is a coloured piece of cloth, the song is thread & needle.

## PM must say sorry for saying Bankim da: Didi

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee has demanded an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for referring to novelist Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay as "Bankim da", calling it disrespectful.

# Oppn urges LS Speaker to remove HC judge over lamp lighting

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Several opposition MPs, spearheaded by the DMK, have submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, requesting a motion for the removal of Madras High Court judge GR Swaminathan. This move follows a controversial ruling by Justice Swaminathan regarding the Arulmighu Subramania Swamy temple.

On 1 December, Justice Swaminathan ordered that a lamp be lit at the deepathoon — a stone lamp pillar located on the Thiruparankundram hillock near a dargah.

The judge asserted that this act would not interfere with the rights of the adjacent dargah or the Muslim community. When the order was not implemented, he issued a further directive on 3 December, permitting devotees to light the lamp themselves and instructed the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to ensure their safety. This led DMK-led Tamil Nadu government to appeal to the Supreme Court.

DMK parliamentary leader Kanimozhi, along with TR Baalu, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, and Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, presented the notice, gathering over 100 signatures for the motion to remove the judge.

The issue surrounding the lighting of the lamp at the hilltop temple has been highly contentious, igniting debate in the Lok Sabha last Friday.

Baalu accused the BJP of attempting to "ignite" communal tensions in Tamil Nadu, while Union minister L Murugan countered, asserting that the Tamil Nadu government was "denying the right to worship." —*PTI*

Opposition MPs submitting a notice of removal Madras High Court judge GR Swaminathan to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

## Laws should aid, not burden citizens: PM

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** urged NDA MPs on Tuesday to ensure that laws are convenient for citizens and do not create unnecessary burdens. Addressing a parliamentary party meeting, he stated, "No innocent Indian should face harassment or inconvenience due to any law or rule." Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju conveyed Modi's message that rules should enhance lives rather than hinder them, emphasising that "there should be no law which harasses people without any reason." Modi also called for collaborative efforts to accelerate development and engage with youth through various activities. The meeting celebrated NDA's significant victory in recent Bihar elections. —*PTI*

## 'No link between death & air pollution'

There is no conclusive data available in the country to establish a direct correlation of death/disease exclusively due to air pollution, Minister of State for Health, Prataprao Jadhav, told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Air pollution is one of the triggering factors for respiratory ailments and associated diseases, Jadhav said in a written reply. —PTI

# MP Minister's brother held for ganja smuggling

SATNA, 9 DEC

The younger brother of Pratima Bagri, a minister in the Madhya Pradesh government, has been arrested for alleged ganja smuggling, according to local police.

In response to the incident, Congress has directed criticism towards the BJP government. They shared a video on social media platform X, featuring Minister of State for Urban Development and Housing Bagri dismissing a reporter's question about the arrest by stating, "Why do you talk about unnecessary things?"

Following a tip-off, police in Rampur Baghelan seized 46kg of ganja—valued at approximately Rs 9,22,680—hidden in rice sacks stored in a tin shed outside the home of Pankaj Singh Baghel, a resident of Maroha. Baghel allegedly claimed that Anil Bagri, Pratima Bagri's brother, and an accomplice named Shailendra Singh supplied the ganja. Anil Bagri has since been arrested, and the vehicle used for the delivery was confiscated. —*PTI*

# Vijay holds 1st rally after Karur stampede

TVK Chief Vijay waves to the gathering during a public meeting, in Puducherry PHOTO: PTI

PUDUCHERRY/CHENNAI, 9 DEC

In his maiden public meeting in this union territory on Tuesday, which also turned out to be his first outdoor meet since the 27 September Karur party event, actor and TVK chief Vijay asked the ruling DMK in neighbouring Tamil Nadu to learn from the 'impartial' regime led by Chief Minister N Rangasamy here.

He targeted the Centre for not paying attention to Puducherry's long-time demand for statehood and slammed it over allocation of funds.

Addressing the rally from his custom-made campaign vehicle, Vijay said the Puducherry government led by CM Rangasamy was definitely not like Tamil Nadu's DMK regime.

This was his first public meeting post the Karur rally.

On Tuesday, over 5,000 people, including party workers and fans took part in the rally held at Uppalam grounds here.

Showering praise on the Puducherry regime, the TVK chief said the UT government is impartial; it has given security to the rally of an outfit that is a rival to the party in power and therefore, the DMK must learn from it.

**SENGOTTAIYAN'S NEPHEW JOINS AIADMK**

TVK leader K A Sengottaiyan's nephew KK Selvam joined the AIADMK in the presence of its general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Tuesday. Selvam had formerly been with the DMK's environmental wing in Erode North District. He joined the AIADMK along with his supporters. His father KA Kaliappan is Sengottaiyan's elder brother. —*PTI*

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND

# *Lawyer who threw shoe at ex-CJI, attacked with slippers*

NEW DELHI, 9 DEC

Rakesh Kishore, the advocate who threw a shoe at the former chief justice of India, BR Gavai, was attacked on Tuesday in the same way by an unknown person at the Karkardooma Court complex in Delhi, said sources.

According to sources, a video went viral where Kishore was seen being beaten by an unidentified person at the Delhi court. The footage also shows him attacking the person back.

Except for Kishore, the footage neither captures the attacker's face nor have their identities been found, said sources.

The purpose of the attack remains unclear as well, it added.

No group or individual has yet claimed responsibility, said sources, adding that none of the authorities have issued an explanation regarding the incident.

Information on whether Kishore would file a police complaint on this matter is not clear, it said.

On 6 October, Kishore came under the spotlight after he attacked Gavai during a court proceeding in the CJI court, the sources said.

According to sources, he had shouted slogans to protect Sanatan Dharma (Hinduism) after Gavai made remarks regarding the restoration of the 7-foot beheaded idol of Lord Vishnu at Khajuraho. After which, Gavai said, "Those aggrieved could seek answers from the deity," said sources.

Due to his action, the Bar Council of India (BCI) suspended his law practice licence with immediate effect, announcing that disciplinary proceedings would follow soon, the sources said.

Meanwhile, Kishore claims that he was attacked by over 100 people today with slippers. —*Agencies*

Rakesh Kishore PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

# WB assembly polls after voters' list publication: Didi

COOCH BEHAR, 9 DEC

West Bengal Chief Minister **Mamata Banerjee** announced that assembly elections in the state would be declared immediately after the publication of final electoral rolls following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in February. This, she asserted, is to prevent potential legal challenges regarding the updated voters' list.

Speaking at a public meeting at Ras Mela ground, Banerjee condemned the SIR, alleging it was designed to instil fear among voters. "They will declare elections just after the final rolls of SIR are out... so that nobody gets the chance to challenge the rolls legally," she claimed, highlighting that citizens are now being asked to "prove our citizenship." She also accused the BJP-led central government of operating under an "anarchic and autocratic" regime, warning that it would "destroy the culture, language and heritage of Bengal" if elected. She alleged that the Centre had withheld funds for the 100-day work scheme and had imposed "humiliating conditions" for their resumption.

Additionally, she tore up a note outlining new MGNREGA norms at a public meeting here, calling it a "valueless and insulting" diktat and vowing that the state would run its own work scheme without seeking "Delhi's charity". Referring to a letter received from the Centre two days ago, she said it imposed "absurd and restrictive" conditions, including submission of a quarterly labour budget and mandatory training before employment. —*PTI*

## Kerala local poll turnout close to 70%

T'PURAM, 9 DEC

Polling in seven districts of Kerala in the first phase of the crucial local body elections on Tuesday—viewed by many as a key indicator ahead of next year's state legislative assembly contest—ended at 6pm with turnout reaching close to 70 per cent.

In the last local body polls in 2020, voting was conducted in three phases, and the total turnout was 75.95 per cent, according to SEC figures.

Voting began at 7am in the seven districts—Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki and Ernakulam—and by 6 pm, the polling percentage had reached 69.52, according to the State Election Commission .

Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan, UDF convener Adoor Prakash and senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala expressed confidence of a "historic win" for the UDF, claiming there was "anti-incumbency" among the people and that the Sabarimala gold issue had hurt the ruling LDF. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

## At 291, Delhi's air quality improves to 'poor' category

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

Delhi's air quality improved slightly on Tuesday, with the city recording an overall Air Quality Index (AQI) of 291, placing it in the "poor" category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). On Monday morning, the AQI had been 318, classified as "very poor." Of the 38 monitoring stations across the city, 18 reported very poor air quality, while 20 recorded poor levels. AQI between 0–50 is "good," 51–100 "satisfactory," 101–200 "moderate," 201–300 "poor," 301–400 "very poor," and 401–500 "severe." The minimum temperature settled at 9.2°C, with 100 per cent morning humidity. The maximum temperature is expected to reach 22–24°C, and the India Meteorological Department has forecast fog for the day. *—PTI*

## Dalit girl raped by autorickshaw driver in Andhra

**AMARAVATI, 9 DEC**

A minor Dalit girl was allegedly raped by an autorickshaw driver, Sai Kumar, after he took her to his home under the pretext of helping her move hostels, police said. The incident occurred on 3 December when the girl was relocating and sought assistance from Kumar, whom she had previously met. "Kumar lured the girl to his house under the guise of helping her and then raped her," a police officer told PTI. The victim reported the assault with the help of friends. Kumar is currently absconding and has switched off his phone, prompting a police manhunt. *—PTI*

## Three dead, five critical after MP hotel meals

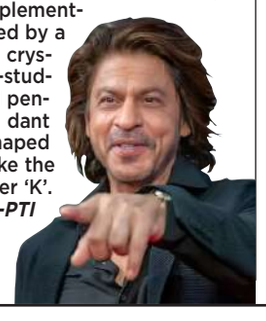
**CHHATARPUR, 9 DEC**

Three employees of a hotel in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, have died and five remain in critical condition after suffering food poisoning. The eight staff members fell ill on Monday night after consuming meals at the establishment and were initially admitted to Chhatarpur District Hospital before being referred to Gwalior for advanced treatment. The deceased have been identified as Pragilal Kushwaha, Girija Rajak and Ramswaroop Kushwaha. The district administration announced immediate financial assistance of Rs 20,000 to their families. Food samples from the hotel have been sent for laboratory testing to determine the cause of the poisoning. The incident coincided with the state cabinet meeting in Khajuraho. *—PTI*

## SRK named among NYT's 67 most stylish people

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has secured a spot on the New York Times' list of 67 Most Stylish People for 2025. Other notable figures include Sabrina Carpenter, A$AP Rocky, and Jennifer Lawrence. The 60-year-old actor garnered attention for his striking appearance at the Met Gala, where he donned a bespoke outfit by acclaimed designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee. Acknowledging his influence, the list noted: "Known by his army of fans simply as SRK, Bollywood's biggest star and one of the world's most famous actors brought the Met Gala into his orbit as a first-time guest." The event featured images of Khan in an elegant all-black ensemble, complemented by a crystal-studded pendant shaped like the letter 'K'. *—PTI*



# Deal with BLOs' issues or it will cause anarchy: SC to EC

## SC questions if CAA citizens can be included in electoral rolls

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

The Supreme Court on Tuesday voiced concern over reports of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and other officials engaged in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2.0 exercise being "threatened" in West Bengal and other states, warning that such disruptions could "cause anarchy" if left unchecked.

The Court also questioned how individuals who have applied for citizenship under the relaxation provided by the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA), could be provisionally added to electoral rolls before their citizenship status is officially determined. A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said it was crucial that the electoral roll revision proceed smoothly. It asked the Election Commission (EC) to report specific instances of non-cooperation or obstruction so that the court could issue directions.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for EC, said states were obliged to ensure protection for BLOs but claimed that in some states, the administration was not cooperating. "If the state government refuses, we have no option except to take the local police on deputation. If the situation still does not improve, we will have to call central forces," he said.

Justice Bagchi, however, noted that the EC cannot take control of the police before the election process formally begins. The court was hearing a plea filed by Sanatani Sangsad and others seeking the deployment of state police under EC control, and if necessary, central forces, in West Bengal until the final electoral rolls are published. Senior advocate V Giri, appearing for the petitioners, alleged a surge in violence and intimidation against BLOs.

The Bench, however, expressed scepticism over the material presented. "Apart from a single FIR, nothing else has been placed before us. The rest are historical references and newspaper reports," Justice Bagchi said, asking whether a specific direction for West Bengal alone could be justified on such limited evidence.

Dwivedi informed the court that the EC had already issued a strong letter to the West Bengal government over reports of threats, obstruction, and even the gherao of the state election office. Justice Bagchi noted that some groups claimed BLOs were over-burdened and exhausted, with instances of suicide reported.

Disagreeing with EC's assertion that BLOs were not under strain, Justice Bagchi emphasised the field-intensive nature of their work.

Issuing notices to the EC, the Centre and the West Bengal government, the Bench sought a detailed response. *—PTI*

Goa govt demolishes 'Romeo Lane', a beach shack illegally constructed at Vagator by the Luthras **PHOTO: SCREENCRAP**

## Landowner flagged Goa club illegalities

**PANAJI/MUMBAI, 9 DEC**

The original landowner of the property on which the 'Birch by Romeo Lane' nightclub operated has said he repeatedly flagged illegalities for nearly two decades, long before the blaze that killed 25 people on 7 December. Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar told PTI he purchased two plots in Arpora in 1994 and signed a sale agreement with Surinder Kumar Khosla in 2004, which was cancelled within six months after Khosla allegedly failed to make payment. Khosla went on to set up a nightclub on the land, later taken over by the Luthra brothers, owners of Birch by Romeo Lane.

Amonkar said he had filed multiple complaints, including one in December 2023, alleging unauthorised construction of shops, restaurants and several structures. The Arpora–Nagoa panchayat issued a demolition notice in February 2024, but Khosla obtained a stay from the Directorate of Panchayat. He alleged that the authorities failed to enforce the law, allowing the club to operate despite its trade licence expiring in March 2024. The Chief Minister's Office has accused the panchayat of granting NOCs and failing to seal the premises under the Goa Panchayat Raj Act.

Meanwhile, a PIL before the Bombay High Court's Goa Bench has sought a court-monitored SIT probe, citing a "systematic failure" of authorities and violation of fire-safety norms acknowledged by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant. The tragedy was reportedly triggered by electric firecrackers.

Police also said Kazakh dancer Kristina, who was performing when the fire broke out, did not have an approved business visa, though she had applied for one. Videos show her fleeing the stage as flames spread rapidly. Eyewitnesses have blamed narrow exits for the high death toll. *—PTI*

# CM rejects Dileep's 'conspiracy' allegation, backs rape survivor

**KANNUR, 9 DEC**

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, actors, and political leaders on Tuesday responded to the acquittal of Malayalam actor Dileep in the 2017 sexual assault case involving a multi-lingual actress.

Vijayan rejected Dileep's claims of a police conspiracy, stating investigators acted solely on the evidence. He denied that Dileep had submitted any complaint to him and reiterated the government's steadfast support for the survivor. "Investigators acted based on evidence; this cannot be seen as a conspiracy against anyone," the CM said.

Actor Asif Ali also expressed his support for the survivor while respecting the court's verdict. Speaking after voting in local body elections, he stressed that justice for the survivor is paramount and urged careful discussion on social media. He noted that the government's decision to appeal the verdict likely reflects a belief that complete justice has not yet been achieved.

Congress clarified that UDF convenor Adoor Prakash's remark that Dileep "got justice" was his personal view. Party leaders, including VD Satheesan and Ramesh Chennithala, backed an appeal, stating the prosecution had not fully established the alleged conspiracy.

The Ernakulam Principal Sessions Court acquitted Dileep and three others while convicting six accused, including prime accused Sunil N S alias Pulsar Suni. Dileep alleged a "real conspiracy" by some police officials and media aimed at harming his career. The sentencing for the convicted accused is scheduled for 12 December. *—PTI*

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and actor Dileep **PHOTO: xxx**

**RS 800 CR FOR 4KM ROPEWAY CAR IN KASHI**

Varanasi will get a rope car to carry pilgrims from the railway station to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple by May 2026. Here are the details:

Cost: Rs 800 cr

Distance: 4km

Duration: 15-20 minutes

The ropeway will have 140 cars. Each car will hold 10 passengers

Tickets priced between Rs 50–Rs 100

## Jawan found dead in Samba

**JAMMU, 9 DEC**

A Border Security Force (BSF) constable was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Samba district, Jammu and Kashmir. Constable Sukhdeep Singh, from Ferozepur, Punjab, was discovered lying in a canal at Rehiyan village on Monday evening. Locals rushed him to the district hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Preliminary investigations indicate he may have accidentally fallen into the canal while riding a motorcycle. Police have launched inquest proceedings to determine the exact cause of death.

In a separate incident, a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) constable collapsed and died inside a camp in Nagrota, Jammu, late on Monday night.

His body was sent to Government Medical College for post-mortem examinations. Officials believe he died of cardiac arrest. *—PTI*

## Fight over onion, garlic ends 23-year-long marriage in Gujarat

**AHMEDABAD, 9 DEC**

A 23-year marriage in Gujarat has ended in divorce, sparked by a protracted dispute over dietary preferences, specifically the wife's refusal to consume onion and garlic due to her adherence to the Swaminarayan sect.

The Gujarat High Court has upheld the Ahmedabad family court's divorce ruling, with Justices Sangeeta Vishen and Nisha Thakore dismissing the woman's appeal to challenge the dissolution, as she no longer contested it.

The court found that the wife's dietary restrictions were the "trigger point" of the couple's differences. Since their marriage in 2002, the husband's mother prepared separate meals for the wife, ensuring they excluded onion and garlic, while other family dishes included these staples.

Despite initially appealing the divorce, the wife was not opposing the dissolution but was concerned about outstanding maintenance. During proceedings, she revealed that maintenance payments hadn't been made for 18 months, with a total of Rs 13,02,000 owed, of which she had received Rs 2,72,000 as interim support.

The husband had previously filed a complaint with the Mahila Police Station claiming "torture and harassment" from his wife. Their marital strife culminated in her leaving with their child in 2007. In 2013, the husband sought divorce, citing "cruelty" and abandonment.

The High Court has instructed the husband to verify and transfer the outstanding maintenance amount to the family court for distribution to the wife. *—PTI*

## Maharashtra CM says doctor's suicide note is hers

**NAGPUR, 9 DEC**

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis confirmed that the handwriting on the suicide note left by a woman doctor, who died in Phaltan, has been verified as hers. During a session in the state assembly, he stated that the police sub-inspector, Gopal Badane, and software engineer, Prashant Bankar, named in the note, were involved in harassing her.

The doctor, employed at a government hospital, was found dead in a hotel in October. In her note, she alleged repeated sexual assault by Badane and mental harassment from Bankar. Fadnavis explained, "Investigations have revealed that Badane sexually exploited her under the pretext of marriage... The second accused also cheated her."

He clarified that the doctor died by hanging, not strangulation, and announced a judicial inquiry to determine if others were implicated. The Chief Minister also condemned the politicisation of the tragedy, asserting that the government prioritises women's safety.

Fadnavis also noted that the deceased was on an 11-month contract, limiting compassionate job support for her family. *—PTI*

**MANDIR-MASJID**

# Bandh against mosques, madrasas cripples Arunachal

**ITANAGAR, 9 DEC**

A 12-hour shutdown called by three organisations demanding the demolition of what they allege are illegally constructed mosques and madrasas paralysed normal life across Arunachal Pradesh's Capital Complex on Tuesday.

The bandh, enforced by the Indigenous Youth Force of Arunachal (IYFA), Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Youth Organisation (APIYO) and All Naharlagun Youth Organisation (ANYO), also sought identification and deportation of alleged illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and a ban on weekly markets in the state capital.

Markets, banks, schools, government and private offices remained shut in Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderwa, with vehicles staying off the roads. Police detained at least six people for enforcing the bandh.

Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Chukhu Apa said robust security arrangements were in place and warned of strict action against those circulating "objectionable" voice messages. The bandh was declared "illegal and unlawful" on Monday by Capital District Magistrate Toko Babu, who said it violated fundamental rights and posed risks amid ongoing municipal and panchayat election preparations. The order, issued under Section 163 of the BNSS and the Arunachal Pradesh Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, warned that enforcing a bandh, held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, would attract penal action. *—PTI*

Tense atmosphere prevails in Itanagar as three youth organisations enforce a 12-hour bandh **PHOTO: ANI**

### Rs 3 crore donated for WB's Babri mosque

Donations for the proposed Babri Masjid-style mosque announced by suspended Trinamool Congress MLA Humayun Kabir in West Bengal's Murshidabad have reached nearly Rs 3 crore, the leader's aides claimed on Tuesday. Kabir laid the foundation stone of the mosque at Rejinagar in Murshidabad district on Saturday.

**ANTI-DEVELOPMENT?**

# *Effigies of greens burnt for protesting tree chopping in U'khand*

**UTTARKASHI, 8 DEC**

Some villages in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district on Monday held a counter protest a day after environmentalists, social workers, and activists gathered in Harsil to protest against the plan to fell deodar trees for the widening of the Gangotri national highway.

The road-widening project is taking place between Jhala and Bhaironghati in the district, and reportedly, over 6,000 trees have been marked for cutting.

Villagers of Dharali, which was hit by a massive flash flood in August, burned effigies of environmentalists on Monday, calling them anti-development for protesting against the project.

Villagers from Upla Taknaur and Dharali staged a protest at the district magistrate's office after burning the effigies. The villagers warned that if the state government and administration do not stop the environmentalists, they will be forced to resort to more aggressive agitation.

A local, Sushil Panwar, said that development has already been stalled due to the disaster, and now the opposition to road widening is further jeopardising their future.

Environmentalists protested by tying sacred threads to the deodar trees in Uttarakhand's Harshil on Sunday **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

- Environmentalists protesting the project tied sacred threads to the deodar trees at a Raksha Sutra programme held in Harshil on Sunday, pledging to protect them.

He said that environmentalists are giving figures that about 6,000 deodar trees are going to be cut for the widening of the highway, but according to the Forest Department and the Border Roads Organisation, only 3,500 trees would be cut.

Panwar said that Dharali village, including Gangotri Dham, is located on the India-China border, and while China has extended its railway line to the international border, the road on the Indian side has not even been widened yet. "Environmentalists are sitting in Delhi and Dehradun advocating for tree conservation, which is hindering the development of the region. The entire Harshil region, including Dharali, opposes these environmentalists," he said. *—PTI*

**BIKER DADIS**

An 87-year-old Mandakini Shah and her 84-year-old sister Ushaben, are seen riding their scooter wearing sarees through Ahmedabad's traffic, earning them an affectionate title of 'Biker Dadis', in a viral video. Ushaben was seen sitting beside her sister in the sidecar
***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

# One month after Delhi blast, victims' families still struggle

On 10 November a Hyundai i20 exploded at 6:52 pm near the Red Fort, killing 15 people and injuring several others. One month later, the victims families remain permanently scarred as they continue to grieve ***PHOTO: PTI***

Clocks have ticked, days have passed but grief sits in homes of Red Fort blast victims like dust that refuses to lift.

What looked like a single violent moment has unfolded into an entire month of numbness — of unanswered questions, hollow rooms, and lives permanently scarred.

A massive blast rocked Delhi on 10 November when a Hyundai i20 car exploded at 6.52pm near the Red Fort, killing 15 people and injuring several others.

The impact of the explosion left several vehicles damaged, with visuals from the site showing mangled bodies and scattered debris.

Among those killed was Amar Kataria, a pharmaceutical businessman who worked in Chandni Chowk's Bhagirath Palace.

That evening, Kataria stepped out after finishing work, unaware that within minutes the world he had built will fall apart.

In the first days after the tragedy, his three-year-old son kept running to the door at every tiny sound.

"He used to turn around every time someone walked past," Amar's relative Swadesh Sethi had said.

"You could see he thought his father was coming."

A month later, the child's confusion has not eased but has simply changed shape.

While he no longer waits by the door, he still does not know that his father will never return. He thinks he is out somewhere and will return soon.

"He still thinks Amar is somewhere outside," Sethi said, his voice choking as he tried to describe what the family is going through.

"He still asks simple things about his father's whereabouts... Things we cannot answer. How do you tell a child that his universe has fallen apart," Sethi asked.

Inside the Kataria home, Amar's wife Kriti has barely spoken since that fateful night.

Trapped in a silence so deep that she has not been able to leave home since the blast.

Kriti now sits at one place for hours, her eyes fixed somewhere far away, Sethi said.

He also requested the government to help Kriti find a job as that would distract her from the grief and also provide financial stability to the family.

"She has a child who will never see his father," Sethi said.

Amar's body was charred beyond recognition but tattoos reading 'Mom my first love', 'Dad my strength', and 'Kriti' helped the family identify him.

Another victim's family is stuck in the same month-long night.

Noman, a 23-year-old who had come to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh's Jhinjhana to buy supplies for his cosmetics shop, never returned home.

His friend survived with injuries and is still recovering at a hospital.

"Noman had come to Delhi that very day to purchase supplies for his shop," his relative Sonu, who lives in the capital, said.

"By evening, everything was over."

Noman's elder brother Sahil, who suffers from a kidney ailment and is admitted to a hospital, still does not know that his younger brother is dead.

He believes Noman is injured and recovering in another ward, Sonu said.

"How do you break such a news to a man who is already in so much pain? Their father is aged. The family's only earning member is gone. It has been a month and Sahil is still ailing. What if we tell him and he goes into shock? He is too vulnerable. He is living a truth we cannot correct. Not yet," Sonu said.

In Shahdara's Rohtas Nagar, Ankush Sharma, who went to visit the Gauri Shankar temple with his neighbour and friend Rahul Kaushik on the evening of 10 November, is fighting a different battle.

Both were caught in the blast. While Rahul was sent home after treatment for burn injuries, Ankush's struggle was harsher. He lost an eye and suffered hearing loss in one ear.

Ankush spent days at the LNJP Hospital before being discharged, only to be admitted again to AIIMS after his wounds worsened.

"When they look into the mirror, both Rahul and Ankush get a shock," family friend Pradeep Kumar said.

Ankush, 27, worked in a jewellery shop. His parents, already fragile with fear, are sinking into depression.

30 nights have passed since the explosion, but for these families, the month has been like one long night without dawn.

Every home touched by the blast carries two worlds now -- the world before 6:52pm on 10 November, and the world after it. *—PTI*

**LETTERS** write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

# OpenAI struggles to stay on top amid Google faceoff

Google's new Gemini 3 model challenges OpenAI's dominance in the global artificial intelligence (AI) race. As rivals invest billions and competition grows, OpenAI faces pressure to innovate — and finally turn a profit.

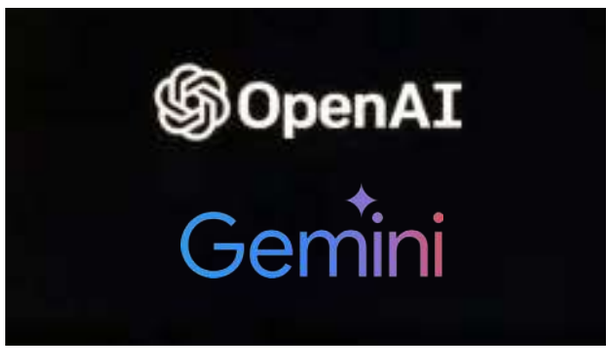
According to media reports, OpenAI plans to unveil a new artificial-intelligence reasoning model that is reportedly surpassing Google's latest, Gemini 3.

Online tech magazine The Decoder cites an industry insiders who claims that the launch is intended to counter Google's recent advances in state-of-the-art reasoning, deep multimodal understanding of text, images and video, as well as coding capabilities.

Google's parent company Alphabet introduced Gemini 3 in November, boasting benchmark results that surpassed OpenAI's flagship model ChatGPT in key categories.

The outcome rattled OpenAI, earlier viewed as the industry front-runner since ChatGPT's debut in 2022 transformed public awareness of generative AI and briefly left competitors scrambling.

Now, OpenAI's lead is no longer assured.




- "It's not only about having the best model, but also about access to computing power and the ability to turn that technology into revenue,"

**A 'CODE RED' MOMENT FOR OPENAI**

The reaction inside OpenAI has been urgent, with CEO Sam Altman reportedly declaring a "code red" in an internal message, instructing teams to focus on improving the quality of ChatGPT and delaying other products as a result, according to the memo cited by the US business newspaper The Wall Street Journal.

"It's not only about having the best model, but also about access to computing power and the ability to turn that technology into revenue," Adrian Cox, an analyst at Deutsche Bank Research, told DW.

OpenAI gained an early edge thanks to a period in which its models outperformed any alternatives, he added, but competitors are quickly closing the gap — and many are backed by companies with enormous distribution networks and cloud infrastructure.

According to Altman, ChatGPT attracts more than 800 million weekly users. But Alphabet can deploy Gemini directly within Google Search, its most profitable product.

The Gemini app already reaches more than 650 million monthly users, Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai wrote on Google's blog, adding that more than 70 per cent of its cloud customers are also using their AI tools.

**OPENAI STILL NOT CARVING A PROFIT**

While Google generates revenue across a wide portfolio of operations, OpenAI must monetize its AI models directly. It currently relies on premium ChatGPT subscriptions and enterprise licensing. Microsoft, a major shareholder, also pays to embed OpenAI technology into its products.

Even so, Altman has acknowledged that the company is not yet profitable.

OpenAI does not disclose financials. But according to Cox, investors were told over the summer that 2030 could be the first profitable year for OpenAI.

HSBC analysts take a dimmer view, as the British financial newspaper, Financial Times, reported recently. The bank projects revenue could reach $213 billion (₹182 biilion) by 2030 — but still this would likely result in a loss of more than $70 billion due to soaring infrastructure costs.

**MASSIVE AI INVESTMENT NEEDS**

Training and running cutting-edge AI systems demand huge outlays for data-center capacity.

Google plans to invest up to $93 billion in AI this year alone, with "significant increases" earmarked for the years to come. The fourth-quarter revenue of its parent Alphabet exceeded $100 billion, fueled largely by advertising and growing cloud demand.

Google also has a hardware advantage, as its proprietary AI chips support model training inside company-owned data centers, thus avoiding purchases of more expensive semiconductors from AI-chip market leader Nvidia.

Facebook's parent company Meta has reportedly expressed interest in using Google's processors for its own AI infrastructure.

Given those strengths, Cox sees "a very high probability" Google will have the leading model at least into next year — not OpenAI.

**COMPETITION WIDENS BEYOND BIG TECH**

Meanwhile, the race for AI leadership is no longer limited to the two Silicon Valley contenders. "Competition has intensified significantly since 2022. We now see strong challengers for the best model like Anthropic alongside established companies like Google," Cox said.

Open-source models from the US, China, and Europe — including from European startup Mistral — are also gaining traction. These systems are smaller and cheaper than OpenAI's offerings, designed for targeted applications rather than broad capability.

Additionally, China's AI companies are also pushing forward. In September, search-engine provider Baidu unveiled its DeepSeek model, claiming performance on par with ChatGPT-5 and Google's

**GEMINI 2.5 PRO**

Analysts say the country is once again leaning on aggressive pricing strategies to undermine competitors in foreign markets — a tactic previously used in solar, steel and electric vehicles.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang warned in November that China is "only nanoseconds behind America in AI."

Across the industry, Cox sees a diverging ecosystem forming as the market is splitting between "smaller, customizable open-source models that are cheap to run, and the large, sophisticated proprietary models."

Yet, he doesn't expect a winner-take-all outcome. "The more (artificial]) intelligence becomes available, the more user applications will emerge." Cox explains. *—DW News*

# *Trump's ceasefire plan in danger as Hamas says won't disarm*

With the remains of one hostage still in Gaza, the first phase of the US-brokered ceasefire in the Israel and Hamas war is nearly complete, after a two-month process plagued by delays and finger-pointing.

Now, the key players, Israel, the Palestinian militant Hamas group, the US and a diverse list of international parties, are to move to a complicated second phase that could reshape the Middle East.

US President Donald Trump's 20-point plan which was approved by the UN Security Council, lays out an ambitious vision for ending Hamas' rule. If successful, it would see the rebuilding of a demilitarized Gaza under international supervision, normalized relations between Israel and the Arab world and a possible pathway to Palestinian independence.

But if the deal stalls, Gaza could be trapped in an unstable limbo for years to come, with Hamas remaining in control of parts of the territory and its residents stuck homeless, unemployed, unable to travel abroad and dependent on international aid to stay alive.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, the Prime Minister of Qatar and a key mediator, said that the ceasefire is at a critical point. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is to visit the White House this month to discuss next steps.

Here is a closer look at the next stages of the ceasefire and the potential pitfalls.

**TROOPS FOR GAZA**

Trump's plan calls for the formation of an international force, known as International Stabilization Force, to maintain security and train Palestinian police to one day to take over.

Countries, including Egypt, Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan and Indonesia have expressed willingness to participate. But no firm decisions have been made.

A US official, speaking anonymously said, partner countries are holding meetings this month to finalize operations. He predicted "boots on the ground" in early 2026.

But there are pitfalls. The force's command structure and authorities remain unknown.

Hamas says it will oppose any attempts by the force to disarm it. Israel, meanwhile, is hesitant to trust an international body with its security needs.

**BOARD OF PEACE**

Trump has said he will head an international board to supervise a committee of Palestinian technocrats running Gaza's day-to-day affairs. The board will oversee a reform process by the Palestinian Authority, allowing the internationally recognized authority to govern Gaza.

So far, Trump is the only board member officially named, though former British prime minister Tony Blair's name has mentioned.

The key challenge will be forming a board that can work with Israel, Hamas, the mediators and international aid agencies.

**RECONSTRUCTION**

Trump's plan to "rebuild and energize Gaza," which suffered widespread destruction during the war with over 2 million people displaced and unemployed.

Still, no such plan has been announced. Egypt is expected to host a conference for donor nations to pledge reconstruction aid.

Tents sheltering displaced Palestinians stand amid the destruction left by the Israeli air and ground offensive in Gaza City ***PHOTO: PTI***

**DISARMAMENT**

The ceasefire deal calls for Hamas to surrender all of its weapons under the supervision of international monitors. Militants who disarm will be granted amnesty and the option to leave Gaza.

However, Hamas, whose ideology is based on armed resistance against Israel, says it will not disarm until Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian territories.

Failure to disarm Hamas could lead to renewed fighting with Israel, blocking progress on the peace plan.

**A PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT**

The Palestinians are to form a "technocratic, apolitical" committee to run daily affairs in Gaza, under the supervision of the Board of Peace.

Committee members have not been announced and Israel's opposition to having any Palestinians connected to Hamas or the Palestinian Authority on it could make choosing them more difficult.

It is also not clear if the committee will give Palestinians any real voice in the government or will exist only to implement decisions by the Board of Peace. If the committee is seen as just a facade, it risks not gaining public support and some may balk at joining it.

**ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS**

Under the ceasefire, Israel is to withdraw from all of Gaza, with the exception of a small buffer zone along the border. At the moment, Israel retains control of over half of Gaza.

Further withdrawals will be based upon "milestones and timeframes linked to demilitarization" to be negotiated by Israel, the US, international force and other "guarantors."

Israel may refuse to pull back further. Its military chief, Lt Gen Eyal Zamir, called the so-called Yellow Line that divides the Israeli-held part of Gaza from the rest a "new border" that would serve as a "forward defensive line for our communities."

**PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY**

The plan calls for a reform of the Palestinian Authority, and create conditions for a "credible pathway" to Palestinian statehood.

Palestinian officials have met with Blair and US officials, and have said they have begun reforms corruption, education system and payments to families of prisoners convicted in attacks on Israelis.

Israel rejects the creation of a Palestinian state, opposes any role for the authority in postwar Gaza and may oppose attempts to bring it in even if more reforms are made. Without a pathway to statehood, any Palestinian support for the new system could crumble. *—PTI*

## RSF seizes control of Heglig oilfield in Sudan

**SUDAN, 9 DEC**

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has claimed control of the strategic Heglig oilfield in South Kordofan, a move confirmed by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), which stated it withdrew "to protect the oil facilities and prevent damage." RSF leader Youssef Alian announced the takeover was executed under his coordination to secure the field from potential threats. The Heglig field is Sudan's largest and critical for South Sudan's oil exports. The RSF has intensified efforts to expand further into central Sudan and has engaged in fierce battles for territory. ***—Agencies***

## Compensate MH370 victims: Court to Malaysia Airlines

**BEIJING, 9 DEC**

A Beijing court has ordered Malaysia Airlines to pay 2.9 million yuan ($410,000) to the families of eight passengers lost in the infamous disappearance of flight MH370 over a decade ago. The court mandated the airline compensate each family for their loved one's death, funeral expenses, and emotional distress. The passengers have been legally declared dead. The ill-fated flight vanished after taking off from Kuala Lumpur for Beijing in 2014, with 239 on board. The majority of the passengers were Chinese. The court noted that 23 other cases are still pending, while agreements have been reached in 47 additional cases. The Malaysian government announced plans to restart the search on 30 December. ***—PTI***

## Japan assesses damage after 7.5 earthquake

**TOKYO, 9 DEC**

Japan is assessing damage and monitoring for aftershocks following a 7.5 magnitude earthquake that occurred late on Monday night, injuring at least 33 people, one seriously. The Fire and Disaster Management Agency reported that most injuries were caused by falling objects. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi stated, "We are putting people's lives first and doing everything we can," as she announced an emergency task force to evaluate the situation. The quake struck around 11.15pm in the Pacific Ocean, about 80km off Aomori's coast. A tsunami of up to 70cm was recorded at Kuji port, leading to damage that included some oyster rafts. Although power outages affected around 800 homes, Tohoku Electric Power Co. reported restoration by Tuesday morning. The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) warned of potential aftershocks and advised residents in 182 municipalities to prepare for emergencies. "You need to prepare," urged JMA official Satoshi Harada. —PTI

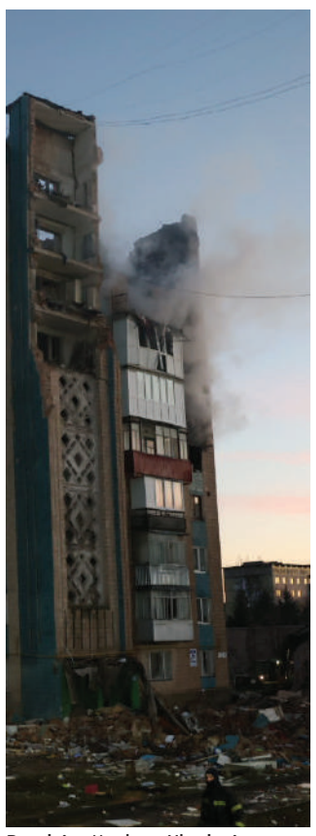
## Amid coups, West Africa bloc declares state of emergency

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has declared a state of emergency in response to a surge in coups and increasing insecurity across member states. Omar Touray, President of the ECOWAS Commission, warned of a "growing erosion of electoral inclusivity" and stressed the need for serious introspection regarding the future of democracy in the region. This declaration follows a failed coup attempt in Benin and a recent military takeover in Guinea-Bissau, raising concerns that coups could become the "new mainstream" in West Africa. Ulf Laessing from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation noted that ECOWAS aims to restore credibility after previous unfulfilled threats of military intervention in Niger. The implications of this declaration remain unclear. ***—PTI***

# ZELENSKYY REFUSES TO CEDE LAND TO RUSSIA

### Ukraine to present a new peace plan to the US, rallies EU



Russia's attack on Ukraine's Ternopil last month killed at least 25 people
***PHOTO: X@ZELENSKYYUA***

**ROME, 9 DEC**

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukraine would not cede land to Russia as mandated by the US-proposed peace deal. Instead, Zelenskyy said Ukraine will propose an alternative peace plan to US President Donald Trump on Tuesday.

Zelenskyy visited Rome on Tuesday to meet with Pope Leo XIV in his papal residence and then have talks with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. This comes after he held talks in London with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz amid mounting US pressure.

Trump said that he was disappointed in Zelenskyy, who he said, "hasn't read the proposal".

However, Starmer, Macron and Merz strongly backed Kyiv, with the UK leader saying Monday that the push for peace was at a "critical stage," and stressed the need for "a just and lasting ceasefire."

Merz, meanwhile, said he was "sceptical" about some details in documents released by the US "We have to talk about it. That's why we are here," he said. "The coming days ... could be a decisive time for all of us."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets Pope Leo XIV in Rome on Tuesday
***PHOTO: X@ZELENSKYYUA***

European leaders are working to ensure that any ceasefire is backed by solid security guarantees both from Europe and the US to deter Russia from attacking again. Trump has not given explicit guarantees in public.

"We clearly don't want to give up anything," even as "the Americans are looking for a compromise today, I will be honest," Zelenskyy told press. "Undoubtedly, Russia insists that we give up territories. (But) according to the law, we don't have such a right."

The 20-point-US proposal says that Ukraine must cede control of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to Russia, which illegally occupies most but not all of the territory. Ukraine and its European allies have firmly resisted the idea of handing over land.

Meanwhile, drone strikes continued.

Several regions of Ukraine faced emergency blackouts on Tuesday due to Russia's prior attacks on energy infrastructure. Russia said that Ukrainian drone strikes injured nine people in the Chuvashia region. *—Agencies*

# Citing Modi, Bibi boasts of clout

**JERUSALEM, 9 DEC**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a fiery speech at the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) on Monday, defended his handling of the country's affairs, asserting that despite an alleged wave of anti-semitism against the Jewish state, Jerusalem enjoys an unprecedented support from many countries and leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Speaking during a '40-signature debate', a parliamentary mechanism that allows the Opposition to compel the PM to appear once a month at the Knesset, Netanyahu defended his government as the Opposition described "the collapse of Israel's international standing" amid the two-year onslaught in Gaza.

"Israel is today stronger than ever," Netanyahu said. "It is the strongest power in the Middle East. This is a direct result of the way we have led the War of Revival (war in Gaza)".

Netanyahu pointed to the visit of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz this week.

"And there are other world powers that are coming our way: I speak frequently with my old friend Modi. We have arranged to meet soon," Netanyahu said. "I will go to the US for another meeting with my friend, President (Donald) Trump."

Israeli media has been speculating a clash between Trump and Netanyahu. However, Netanyahu said that they have no better ally than each other. He also touted his friendship with Russian President Vladimir Putin. *—PTI*

# Toll mounts as Cambodia, Thailand clashes continue

People take refuge in Prey Chamkar Ta Doak market in Banteay Meanchey province in Cambodia, near the border with Thailand
***PHOTO: PTI***

**PHNOM PENH/BANGKOK, 9 DEC**

Cambodia on Tuesday said that Thailand's military has resumed attacks in the border regions between the two countries. At least seven civilians were killed in attacks overnight and on Tuesday morning, Cambodia's Information Ministry said, with another 20 people injured.

Thailand, meanwhile, said two more of its soldiers were killed in the latest border clashes raising the Thai death toll to three since the beginning of the clashes broke out on 7 December.

The Cambodian Defence Ministry said in a statement that the Thai military forces operated intense shelling activities in Chok Chey and Prey Chan villages. "They also deployed drones for aerial reconnaissance in the Boeung Trakuon area and expanded their scope of operations to Boeung Pring, Thmar Pouk, and Komrieng districts, using various types of heavy and destructive military weapons and shooting gas."

Bangkok, however, said Cambodia was continually provoking Thailand, firing weapons and planting landmines and in the face of such persistent provocations it is forced to retaliate. They alleged that Cambodia was using artillery, rocket launchers and bomb-dropping drones to attack Thai forces.

The latest escalation comes after a US Donald Trump-brokered truce on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur between Thailand and Cambodia that has been in place since late October. The ceasefire followed the violent military clashes in July where nearly four dozen people were killed.

On Tuesday, both Thai Prime Minister Anutin Chaand and Cambodian leader Hun Manet said that diplomacy was not an option and that neither side had reached out to the other to bring about peace, vowing powerful retaliation. *—Agencies*

# UAE-backed group challenges Houthis in Yemen

**ADEN, 9 DEC**

A government official said Yemen's airspace was briefly closed on Monday as tensions escalated in the country's south after a separatist group backed by the United Arab Emirates took over an oil-rich region.

The recent takeover of areas in Hadhramaut province by the Southern Transitional Council (STC) reflects a rift in forces aligned against the Iran-backed Houthi rebels who have taken most of the country's north, including the capital, Sanaa.

Since 2014, Yemen has been embroiled in a civil war pitting the Iranian-backed Houthis against an internationally recognised government, which is supported by a Saudi-led military coalition. The separatist STC is part of the anti-Houthi camp, but it seeks an independent state in southern Yemen.

Yemen has been embroiled in a civil war since 2014, with Iranian-backed Houthis taking control of the northern half
***PHOTO: XINHUA***

The STC — an umbrella of armed groups trained and financed by the UAE — expanded its control over Yemen's south earlier this month. They seized control of Seiyun in Hadhramaut, including crucial oil fields and energy installations, including PetroMasila, Yemen's largest oil company, following brief clashes with the Yemeni military, and allied tribes.

Forces of the secessionist group were deployed across the strategic Wadi Hadramout area, which includes major urban centers and military bases, according to STC-allied media. They took over the presidential palace and the international airport in Seiyun last week, and advanced to the province of Mahra, which borders Oman, the group said. STC forces now control almost all Yemen's southern half. *—PTI*

# DoJ can unseal Ghislaine Maxwell sex trafficking case records

**NEW YORK, 9 DEC**

The Justice Department can publicly release investigative materials from a sex trafficking case against Ghislaine Maxwell, the longtime confidant of Jeffrey Epstein, a federal judge said on Tuesday.

Judge Paul A Engelmayer ruled after the Justice Department in November asked two judges in New York to unseal grand jury transcripts and exhibits from Maxwell and Epstein's cases, along with investigative materials that could amount to hundreds or thousands of previously unreleased documents.

The ruling, in the wake of the passage last month of the Epstein Files Transparency Act, means the records could be made public within 10 days. The law requires the Justice Department provide Epstein-related records to the public in a searchable format by 19 December.

Engelmayer is the second judge to allow the Justice Department to publicly disclose previously secret Epstein court records. Last week, a judge in Florida granted the department's request to release transcripts from an abandoned federal grand jury investigation into Epstein in the 2000s.

Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell
***PHOTO: FILE***

A request to release records from Epstein's 2019 sex trafficking case is still pending.

Three judges — two in New York and one in Florida — had previously refused the request to unseal grand jury transcripts.

The latest request, though, dramatically enlarged the files that the department said it planned to release to encompass 18 categories of investigative materials gathered in the massive sex trafficking probe.

Epstein, a financier, was arrested in July 2019 on sex trafficking charges, a month before he was found dead in a federal jail cell. The death was ruled a suicide. Maxwell was convicted of sex trafficking charges in December 2021. She is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

Maxwell's lawyer said his client took no position about the requested unsealing, except to note that her plans to file a habeas petition could be spoiled because the public release of materials "would create undue prejudice". *—PTI*

## Trump threatens 5% tariff on Mexico over water shortfall

**WASHINGTON, 9 DEC**

US President Donald Trump has announced plans to impose a 5 per cent tariff on Mexico if it fails to supply water owed to the United States under a longstanding treaty. In a post on Truth Social, Trump accused Mexico of not meeting its treaty commitments for five years, resulting in a deficit of over "800,000 acre-feet of water," which he claims is severely impacting "our beautiful Texas crops and livestock."

He stated that the US expects Mexico to deliver 200,000 acre-feet of water before 31 December, warning that delays are harming agricultural producers.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum responded on X, emphasising that Mexico has complied with the treaty "to the extent water is available" due to three years of drought. She added that she has proposed short-term solutions to address the issue. *—ANI*

**OFFERS USD 300 MILLION**

# *New York Archdiocese to settle 1,300 sexual abuse complaints*

**NEW YORK, 9 DEC**

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York said on Monday that it was raising at least USD 300 million as it moved to negotiate a settlement that would benefit roughly 1,300 people who have said they were sexually abused as minors by its priests and lay staff members.

The archdiocese said it had agreed with representatives of the accusers on a mediator and had begun to raise money by cutting costs and selling assets, including its headquarters and other real estate.

Jeff Anderson, a lawyer who represents 300 people who have filed abuse claims against the archdiocese, said on Monday that the archdiocese had taken "a step in the right direction," but added, "There is no agreement at all... This is the first time the archdiocese has shown willingness to engage in any kind of process to bring all of this toward resolution".

Cardinal Timothy Dolan ***PHOTO: X***

It was not clear that the two parties would agree.

"The sexual abuse of minors long ago has brought shame upon our church," Cardinal Timothy Dolan wrote in a public email to roughly 3,00,000 Catholics across New York. "I once again ask forgiveness."

The announcement came on the same day that the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans said it would pay at least $230 million to hundreds of abuse survivors as part of a negotiated settlement approved by a federal judge in Louisiana. *—ANI*

# AT LEAST 22 KILLED IN FIRE AT INDONESIA OFFICE

**JAKARTA, 9 DEC**

A devastating fire tore through a seven-storey office building in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Tuesday, claiming the lives of at least 22 people, including a pregnant woman, police reported. The blaze, which erupted around midday in the Kemayoran district, is believed to have started on the first floor and quickly spread to higher levels.

Central Jakarta police chief Susatyo Purnomo Condro stated that many workers were out for lunch when the fire ignited, allegedly due to a battery sparking in a storage area. Eyewitness Intan Puspita described the scene: "When asked, they said that there was an alleged short circuit in one of the batteries during the charging process. It was tragic."

Firefighters battled the inferno for three hours, rescuing 19 trapped workers, though many suffered minor injuries and smoke inhalation.

Rescuers carry a body from the blaze site in Jakarta on Tuesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Governor Pramono Anung underscored the need for better workplace safety, stating, "This case obviously shows the company does not provide emergency access in the direct physical sense."

Authorities continue to investigate the cause of the fire as families await news of their loved ones. This comes shortly after the deadly blaze in Hong Kong, where at least 159 people died. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

## Gold slumps by Rs 1,000 to Rs 1.31 lakh/10g

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

Gold prices declined by Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,31,600 per 10g in the national capital on Tuesday, tracking a muted demand in the local markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Analysts said traders stayed cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy meeting announcement also weighed on the sentiment. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had finished at Rs 1,32,600 per 10g on Monday. In tandem with gold, silver prices also slumped by Rs 4,500 to Rs 1,80,500 per kilogram from the previous close of Rs 1,85,000 per kg, as per the association. In the international markets, spot gold rose by USD 14.83, or 0.35 per cent, to USD 4,205.57 per ounce. Spot silver was trading 0.75 per cent higher at USD 58.59 per ounce in the overseas trade. *—PTI*

## Rupee rises 17P to close at 89.88 against USD

**MUMBAI, 9 DEC**

The rupee pared its initial losses and settled for the day in the positive territory, up 17 paise at 89.88 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as American currency and crude oil prices retreated from their elevated levels. Forex traders said the weakness of the US dollar in the overseas market, amid expectations of a US Fed rate cut in December, supported the rupee at lower levels. However, a negative trend in domestic equities and foreign fund outflows weighed on investor sentiment, limiting the local unit's appreciation. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.15 against the US dollar, down 10 paise from its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index was trading 0.10 per cent lower at 98.98. *—PTI*

## Welspun One to invest ₹550 cr in Pune logistics park

**MUMBAI, 9 DEC**

Welspun One is investing Rs 550 crore to develop a 1.2-million-sq-ft (around 27 acres) Grade-A logistics park in Pune. The warehousing and industrial real-estate company has already been allotted 46 acres of land in Pune's Talegaon MIDC Phase- IV. The upcoming park will be designed to meet the distinct operational needs of high-demand sectors such as 3PL, e-commerce, FMCG, automotive, engineering, auto ancillary, and manufacturing industries. Pune recorded approximately 170 acres of warehouse leasing, marking a 10 per cent growth compared to this time last year, the company said. The Talegaon-Chakan belt alone accounted for nearly 70 per cent of this activity. *—PTI*

## Danube's ₹3.5K cr Dubai tower named after SRK

**DUBAI, 9 DEC**

Danube Properties will invest about Rs 3,500 crore to develop a premium commercial tower in Dubai named after Shah Rukh Khan, targeting strong global corporate office demand. Last month, the 'SHAHRUKHZ by Danube' commercial tower was officially launched at a Mumbai event attended by Shah Rukh Khan. "We launched this project for sale last month and the response so far has been overwhelming," Danube Group Founder and Chairman Rizwan Sajan. The 55-storey commercial tower, to be constructed on Sheikh Zayed Road here, will be completed by 2029. The upcoming office tower will have more than 40 amenities, with a starting price of Rs 4.2 crore. Danube Properties is expecting a revenue of more than Rs 4,000 crore from this project. *—PTI*

# Govt mulls licence for firms to use copyright works for training AI

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

Seeking public views, a government panel proposed a mandatory blanket licence for AI developers. Allowing legal access to copyright-protected works to train AI systems. However, the licence should be accompanied by a statutory remuneration right for the copyright holders, according to the committee's recommendation.

These suggestions are part of a working paper prepared by the committee and released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), seeking stakeholders' views. Under this framework, the rights holders will not have the option to withhold their works from use in the training of AI Systems. According to the paper. Generative AI has immense potential to transform the world for better, underscoring the need for a regulatory environment that supports its development.

However, the processes by which the AI systems are trained, often using copyrighted materials without authorisation from copyright holders have sparked an important debate around copyright law. The committee recognised that access to large volumes of high-quality data is crucial for AI development.

It added that the panel has decided to adopt a hybrid approach which ensures availability of all lawfully accessed copyrighted content for AI training as a matter of right, without the need for individual negotiations; reduced transaction costs for the developers; and reduced compliance burden. It has suggested fair compensation to copyright holders; judicial review over royalty rates established; easy and straightforward process of payment to rightsholders; and level playing field for start-ups and small players. *—PTI*

# Adani to invest $75B in energy transition in 5 years

## He warns against 'narrative colonisation' by history's emitters

**DHANBAD, 9 DEC**

Adani Group chairman **Gautam Adani** on Tuesday said the conglomerate will invest over USD 75 billion in the energy transition space over the next five years, asserting that the country must do what is best for itself, define its own development path and resist external pressures.

Speaking at the 100th foundation day of the Indian Institute of Technology (Indian School of Mines), Dhanbad, Adani said the group is building the world's largest renewable energy park at Khavda in Gujarat, spread over 520 sq km.

"At full capacity by 2030, this park will generate 30 gw of green energy. At average household consumption, this is equivalent to powering over 60 million homes a year," he said.

"With the first 10 GW already commissioned, we are on track to deliver the world's lowest-cost green electron, setting a global benchmark in energy transition," he added.

Adani said India is the world's third-largest electricity consumer, but its per capita consumption remains "less than 1,400 kWh a year, less than half the global average, one-tenth of America, and one-fifth of Europe."

Additionally, Adani warned against what he called "narrative colonisation" by some of history's highest emitters who now lecture developing nations on carbon reduction, saying India must not allow external pressures to shape its development priorities or risk having its growth "criminalised."

Speaking at the centenary of IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, he said India must define its own growth path at a time when global alliances are fracturing and nations are acting primarily in self-interest.

- Gautam Adani said India must define its own growth path at a time when global alliances are fracturing and nations are acting primarily in self-interest.

The Adani Group chairman said sovereignty in the 21st century would rest on a nation's command over its natural resources and energy systems, calling these the twin pillars of economic independence.

Meanwhile, emphasising that India's sovereignty depends on mastering the resources beneath its soil, Adani said the nation must chart its own development path at a time when global alliances are increasingly fracturing. *—PTI*

## India shows 2nd strongest global hiring: Survey

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

India is set to record the second strongest hiring outlook globally for the January–March 2026 quarter, with 52 per cent of employers planning to increase staffing levels, according to the latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey.

The country's Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for Q1 2026 stands at 52 per cent, rising 27 percentage points from the previous quarter and 30 points year-on-year. Brazil leads the global rankings with an NEO of 54 per cent, followed by India and the United Arab Emirates(46 per cent).

The survey, based on responses from 3,051 employers across India in October 2025, notes that the positive sentiment is supported by stronger-than-expected economic growth, aided by a favourable monsoon, and improved rural demand and lower oil prices keeping inflation under control.

Despite the upbeat outlook, overall hiring volumes have eased.

A typical company expects its workforce to grow by 65 employees in Q1 2026, significantly lower than in earlier quarters, with very large firms cutting hiring sharply.

Finance & Insurance remains the strongest sector, followed by Professional, Scientific & Technical Services and Construction & Real Estate. *—PTI*

## Telangana secures ₹2.43L cr investments at Global Summit

**HYDERABAD, 9 DEC**

The Telangana government has entered into investment agreements totalling Rs 2.43 lakh crore on the first day of the ongoing Telangana Raising Global Summit. Notable among the signatories is Trump Media & Technology Group, which has committed Rs 41,000 crore to establish an international media and smart technology centre, projected to generate thousands of jobs.

Bollywood actor Salman Khan's Salman Khan Ventures Industries is set to invest Rs 10,000 crore to create a special township and a state-of-the-art film and television studio within the state.

"On the very first day, investment agreements worth about Rs 2.43 lakh crore were finalised. As many as 35 MoUs were signed," an official release stated, underlining Telangana's growth towards its 'Vision 2047' goal.

With Chief Minister **A Revanth Reddy** and Industries Minister Sridhar Babu at the helm, a range of agreements were made. *—PTI*

### AMSL, Telangana sign ₹1,500 cr deal

Apollo Micro Systems Ltd (AMSL) has signed an MoU with the Telangana government to invest Rs 1,500 crore in a new defense manufacturing facility in the state. The agreement, signed on Monday, will see AMSL and its subsidiaries establish a Greenfield project aimed at significantly expanding the company's production and explosive-filling capabilities. The proposed facility will focus on the manufacture and filling of warheads, rocket motors, and small-, medium- and large-calibre artillery systems, along with complete ammunition systems for artillery, rockets and other armaments. The output will serve both domestic and international markets. *—PTI*

## Vingroup to invest $3B in T'gana's multiple sectors

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

Vietnam's Vingroup plans to invest USD 3 billion in Telangana in a phased manner to develop a multi-sector ecosystem in the state. As stated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Telangana government, both sides will explore strategic opportunities across smart urban development, electric mobility, healthcare, education, tourism, renewable energy, and charging infrastructure.

Vingroup entered the Indian market through its EV brand VinFast with a manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu. Telangana CM Revanth Reddy called Vingroup's USD 3 billion investment a major vote of confidence in the state's 'Telangana Rising' vision and its green, sustainable urban focus.

In electric mobility, the company proposes to introduce India's first large-scale electric taxi fleet platform using VinFast vehicles through Green and Smart Mobility and may explore potential opportunities associated with EV manufacturing initiatives in the future. It is expected to generate around 10,000 jobs, featuring a mix of low-rise and high-rise developments. *—PTI*

**2,550 STOCKS ADVANCE**

# Mkts fall for 2nd day on profit booking in bank shares

**MUMBAI, 9 DEC**

Stock markets closed lower for the second straight day on Tuesday, with benchmark BSE Sensex declining by 436 points as investors booked profit ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 436.41 points, or 0.51 per cent, to close at a nearly two-week low of 84,666.28. During the day, the barometer plunged by 719.73 points, or 0.84 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 84,382.96 as blue-chip private banks, oil and IT shares retreated.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped by 120.90 points, or 0.47 per cent, to settle at 25,839.65. In the intraday session, it depreciated by 232.55 points, or 0.89 per cent, to hit a low of 25,728.

Among the Sensex constituents, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel, Maruti Suzuki India, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Tata Consultancy Services, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles were the laggards.

However, Eternal, Titan, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics Ltd, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers.

Broader markets rebounded with BSE midcap gauge rising by 0.60 per cent and smallcap index advancing 1.27 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Focussed IT declined the most by 1.18 per cent, Information Technology by 0.89 per cent, Teck by 0.72 per cent, Auto by 0.63 per cent, Metal by 0.34 per cent, and Consumer Durables and Energy fell by 0.16 per cent each.

On the other hand, Capital Goods, Power, Industrials, Telecommunication, Consumer Discretionary, FMCG, Utilities were among the gainers.

As many as 2,550 stocks advanced, while 1,625 declined and 156 remain unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

# Anil Ambani's son booked for ₹228 cr fraud

**NEW DELHI, 9 DEC**

The CBI conducted searches at the residence of Jai Anmol Anil Ambani, the son of industrialist Anil Ambani, on Tuesday after registering an FIR against him and Reliance Home Finance Ltd (RHFL) for allegedly cheating the Union Bank of India of Rs 228 crore, officials said.

The CBI acted on a complaint from the bank (erstwhile Andhra Bank) against Reliance Home Finance Ltd., the then director Jai Anmol and ex-CEO Ravindra Sharad Sudhakar, alleging that the company did not repay the credit availed from the bank that turned the account into a non-performing asset in 2019, they said.

"The CBI obtained search warrants from the court of Special Judge for CBI, Mumbai and has commenced searches at two official premises of Reliance Home Finance Ltd., residential premises of Jai Anmol Ambani, son of Anil Ambani, the then Director of Reliance Home Finance Ltd. and residential premises of Ravindra Sudhalkar, Ex-CEO and Whole Time Director of RHFL, all at Mumbai on 9 Decemeber, 2025," the CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

- Reliance Home Finance Ltd. had availed loans to the tune of Rs 5572.35 crore from 18 banks, financial institutions, non-banking financial companies and corporate bodies including the Union Bank of India

CBI teams reached the seventh floor of the Sea Wind building, the residence of Anil Ambani in Cuffe Parade, Mumbai, this morning from where several incriminating" documents were taken into possession during searches, officials said.

Reliance Home Finance Ltd. had availed loans to the tune of Rs 5572.35 crore from 18 banks, financial institutions, non-banking financial companies and corporate bodies including the Union Bank of India, she said. *—PTI*

## Boeing acquires Spirit AeroSystems for $4.7B

**WASHINGTON, 9 DEC**

Boeing has finalised its $4.7 billion acquisition of Spirit AeroSystems, a crucial supplier for its 737 Max jetliners, including an Alaska Airlines aircraft involved in a door-panel blowout last year.

The deal, which has been in the pipeline for over a year, also consolidates Boeing's largest provider of spare parts.

CEO Kelly Ortberg described the acquisition as a "pivotal moment" for Boeing's future.

Boeing previously spun off Spirit, based in Wichita, Kansas, in 2005.

The decision to reabsorb the company marks a departure from Boeing's long-standing strategy of outsourcing major aircraft components—an approach that has faced criticism due to manufacturing issues that disrupted the production and delivery of key models like the 737 and 787.

This acquisition follows heightened scrutiny over Boeing's safety culture, particularly after a safety incident involving Alaska Airlines, prompting the company to prioritise improvements in quality and safety.

Shares of Boeing rose 2.2 per cent upon completion of the deal, which the company values at approximately $8.3 billion. *—PTI*

**WARNS BLINKIT CEO**

# *'India's e-commerce bubble close to bursting'*

**GURUGRAM, 9 DEC**

India's quick-commerce boom is nearing a breaking point, Blinkit CEO **Albinder Dhindsa** warned. After years of heavy fundraising and mounting losses, companies must soon decide how long they can keep burning cash.

Blinkit, formerly Grofers, was acquired in 2022 by Zomato's parent, Eternal, after heavy losses. "Blinkit will not chase growth for the sake of growth," Dhindsa said, adding that he has learned from his Grofers experience.

Global investors have poured billions into India's quick-commerce sector, making it the world's most closely watched experiment in rapid delivery. Similar ventures across the US, Europe and other parts of Asia have already begun unraveled. India's dense cities, lower cost of labour and ubiquitous digital payments offer an edge, but the economics depend on logistics efficiency and continued access to capital.

- Investors have been cautious even as funding needs climb. Swiggy Ltd., Blinkit's smaller rival, is preparing a $1.1 billion share sale barely a year after its $1.3 billion market debut

Investors have been cautious even as funding needs climb. Swiggy Ltd., Blinkit's smaller rival, is preparing a $1.1 billion share sale barely a year after its $1.3 billion market debut—at roughly the same as its IPO price. Competitor Zepto has raised $450 million ahead of a planned initial public offering next year.

Regarding Swiggy's upcoming sale, its stock still trades close to its IPO price, showing how investors are rethinking the risks of a business long propped up by easy capital used to fuel rapid expansion. *—PTI*

# 350 players to go under the hammer in IPL auction

## Quinton de Kock, Smith emerge as surprise additions

**MUMBAI, 9 DEC**

A total of 350 cricketers, including 240 Indians, will go under the hammer at the IPL auction in Abu Dhabi on December 16, with South Africa's returning star Quinton de Kock emerging as a surprise late addition. The wicketkeeper-batter, who recently reversed his ODI retirement, enters the auction at a base price of Rs 1 crore. Australia's Steve Smith, last seen in the IPL in 2021, has been listed at a Rs 2 crore base price.

This year's auction saw 1,390 registrations, trimmed to 1,005, before 350 players were shortlisted for 77 available slots, including 31 overseas positions, across the 10 franchises for the league's 19th season.

The first set of names includes Mumbai batters Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan, both at a Rs75 lakh base price. Shaw featured regularly in the IPL from 2018 to 2024 but went unsold last season, while Sarfaraz last appeared in 2021.

Among the top-priced bracket are Australia's Cameron Green and Jake Fraser-McGurk, New Zealand's Devon Conway, and South Africa's David Miller — all listed at Rs 2 crore. India all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer, released by Kolkata Knight Riders, has also set his base price at Rs 2 crore. Domestic standouts Kunal Chandela and Ashok Kumar, leading performers in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, feature in the final list.

This year's auction saw 1,390 registrations **PHOTO: X**

Kolkata Knight Riders enter the auction with the largest purse at Rs 64.3 crore, followed by Chennai Super Kings with Rs 43.4 crore and Sunrisers Hyderabad with Rs 25.5 crore.

A strong overseas contingent includes 21 England players, among them Jamie Smith, Gus Atkinson, Liam Livingstone, and Ben Duckett. Green heads a group of 19 Australians, featuring Josh Inglis, Matthew Short, Cooper Connolly, and Beau Webster.

De Kock and Miller join 15 South African players, including pacers Anrich Nortje, Lungi Ngidi, Gerald Coetzee, and all-rounder Wiaan Mulder. The West Indies contingent includes quicks Alzarri Joseph and Shamar Joseph, alongside Ackeem Auguste, Shai Hope, and Roston Chase.

Sri Lanka contributes 12 players, including spinners Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana, and Traveen Matthew, as well as batters Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, and Kusal Perera. New Zealand's Conway and Rachin Ravindra, both released by CSK, headline a group of 16 Kiwi players. Afghanistan's Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Naveen-ul-Haq lead its 10-player contingent. *—PTI*

# Heartbroken India eye podium finish in FIH Junior World Cup

Indian player lost to Germany with 5-1 in the semi-final match in Chennai on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

**CHENNAI, 9 DEC**

Despite the heartbreak of missing out on the FIH Men's Junior World Cup title, hosts India are determined to salvage their tournament by clinching a bronze medal against Argentina on Wednesday.

India's hopes of reclaiming the title, which they last won in 2016, were dashed following a disappointing 1-5 defeat to reigning champions Germany in the semifinals. Coach PR Sreejesh acknowledged the need for his team to regroup and learn from their mistakes. "We committed silly mistakes, conceded goals, and it is quite hard for these guys after conceding easy goals in a Junior World Cup semifinal," he noted. "If you fail to execute your plans, then that definitely is going to hurt you."

Argentina, two-time champions and fresh from a narrow 1-2 semifinal defeat to Spain, will pose a considerable challenge. "Winning and losing matters a lot; it's the same whether you lose 1-0 or 10-0, but the issue lies in how we concede goals. We need to focus on that first," Sreejesh added.

India's defence, led by skipper Rohit, must improve after their poor showing against Germany, where the forwards struggled to convert chances. The midfield's cohesion will also be crucial, with players like Rosan Khujur and Ankit Pal needing to link play effectively.

An area of concern remains penalty corners, as the hosts have struggled to convert set pieces.

As the bronze medal match approaches, India aims to provide their home fans with a reason to celebrate. *—PTI*

### Goalkeeping stint shaped Princedeep's hockey career

**CHENNAI, 9 DEC**

Princedeep Singh, a 21-year-old goalkeeping star from Batala, Punjab, is making waves at the FIH Junior World Cup, crediting his football background for his success in hockey. Initially playing as a full-back for Cheema Academy, Princedeep honed his skills as a football goalkeeper during training, which led coaches to suggest he pursue goalkeeping in hockey. He idolises two-time Olympic medallist PR Sreejeesh, stating, "I started my hockey career in 2015... I idolise coach sir... he knew how to handle pressure." Princedeep showcased his talent with crucial saves against Belgium, highlighting the importance of communication amidst a packed crowd: "In front of such a huge crowd, we just try to focus on playing simple hockey and keep communication between players." *—PTI*

### Olympic champ among 23,000 runners for Kolkata

**KOLKATA, 9 DEC**

The 10th Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata on 21 December will feature over 23,000 runners, headlined by double Olympic and triple world champion Joshua Cheptegei. The World Athletics Gold Label race offers a USD 25,000 bonus for breaking the 1:11:08 world record, alongside a USD 142,214 prize purse with equal awards for men and women. Cheptegei makes his 25K debut, facing competition from Tanzania's world marathon winner Alphonce Felix Simbu, Ethiopia's Haymanot Alew and Lesotho's Tebello Ramakongoana. In the women's field, defending champion and record-holder Sutume Asefa Kebede seeks a hat-trick, challenged by Degitu Azimeraw, Sarah Chelangat and Agnes Keino. *—PTI*

# Glenn Phillips recalled for NZ's second test

**WELLINGTON, 9 DEC**

New Zealand have announced a 14-player squad for the second Test against the West Indies, with several key players sidelined due to injuries. Experienced all-rounder Glenn Phillips has been recalled after not representing New Zealand since the ICC Champions Trophy earlier this year. The 29-year-old was dealing with a groin injury but returned to first-class cricket at the end of November.

Phillips' inclusion comes as Matt Henry, Nathan Smith, Tom Blundell, and Mitchell Santner are all out with injuries. This could mark Phillips' first Test appearance since December last year against England in Hamilton.

The new-look New Zealand squad features three debutants, including wicketkeeper Mitch Hay, who is expected to make his Test debut. Uncapped pacers Kristian Clarke and Michael Rae are also in contention alongside Jacob Duffy.

New Zealand coach Rob Walter commended Clarke and Rae, stating, "They both have good skill with the red-ball, and there's a great opportunity for them to show that skill at the highest level."

The New Zealand squad includes: Tom Latham (c), Michael Bracewell, Kristian Clarke, Devon Conway, Jacob Duffy, Zak Foulkes, Mitch Hay, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Michael Rae, Rachin

# Hazlewood out of Ashes, Cummins to return

**BRISBANE, 9 DEC**

Australian fast bowler Josh Hazlewood has been ruled out of the Ashes series due to hamstring and Achilles injuries. Despite missing Australia's convincing victories over England in Perth and Brisbane, Hazlewood had been expected to return later in the five-match series.

Josh Hazlewood

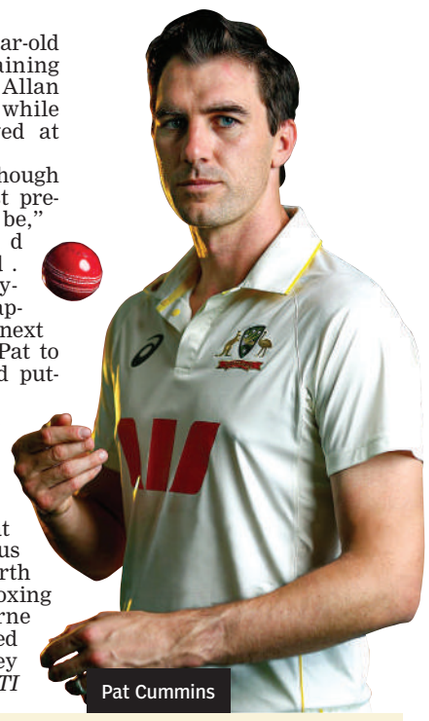
However, Australia coach Andrew McDonald confirmed on Tuesday that he will now focus on recovering in time for the Twenty20 World Cup early next year.

"He'll be out of the series and his preparation will then shift toward the World Cup, which is an incredibly important campaign for us," McDonald stated. "It's really flat for him. A couple of setbacks we didn't see coming — we thought he'd play a huge part in the series."

Pat Cummins is anticipated to make his comeback for the third Test in Adelaide, starting 17 December, after missing the first two matches due to a back injury. The 32-year-old has increased his training workload at Allan Border Field while the team played at the Gabba.

"We feel as though he'll be as best prepared as can be," McDonald remarked. "Barring anything else happening in the next week, I'd be expecting Pat to be tossing the coin and putting the blazer on."

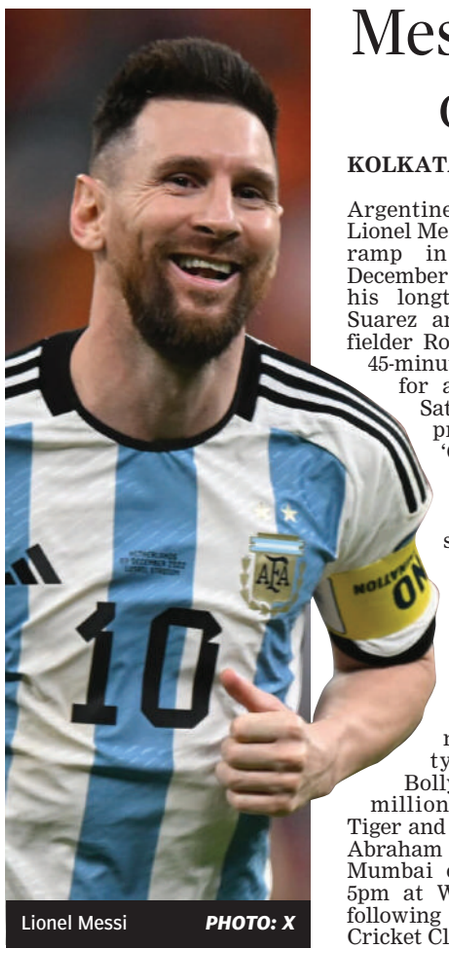
With England in need of a win in Adelaide to keep their hopes of reclaiming the Ashes alive, the squad is taking time off to relax at one of Australia's famous beach towns. The fourth Test will take place on Boxing Day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, followed by the fifth Test in Sydney from 4 January. *—PTI*


Pat Cummins

# Messi, Suarez to reunite on Mumbai ramp

**KOLKATA, 9 DEC**

- His tour will culminate with a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, following events in Hyderabad, where Messi will partake in a GOAT Cup featuring a celebrity 7v7 match.


Lionel Messi **PHOTO: X**

Argentine football legend Lionel Messi is set to walk the ramp in Mumbai on 14 December, collaborating with his longtime partner Luis Suarez and Argentina midfielder Rodrigo De Paul in a 45-minute fashion segment for a charitable cause. Satadru Dutta, the sole promoter of the 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025', confirmed that Messi has been requested to bring select memorabilia from the 2022 World Cup for an auction to be held during the event.

Dutta specified, "It's a fully reserved night... There will be celebrity models, celebrity cricketers, Bollywood celebrities, millionaires, founders. Tiger and Jackie Shroff, John Abraham among others." The Mumbai event will start at 5pm at Wankhede Stadium, following a Padel Cup at the Cricket Club of India.

In Kolkata, Messi's unveiling of his "biggest ever statue" – a 70-feet structure – will now occur virtually from his hotel due to security concerns. "Police has not given permission so he will do it from the hotel. It will be done virtually in the morning," a Kolkata Police source revealed. Messi is expected in Kolkata early on Saturday and will participate in a sponsor-exclusive meet-and-greet.

His tour will culminate with a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, following events in Hyderabad, where Messi will partake in a GOAT Cup featuring a celebrity 7v7 match. This marks Messi's first visit to India since 2011. *—PTI*

## MARK WOOD RULED OUT OF ASHES SERIES DUE TO KNEE INJURY

**BRISBANE, 9 DEC**

England fast bowler Mark Wood has been ruled out of the Ashes series due to a persistent left knee injury, a significant blow for an England side trailing 2-0 in the five-match series. Wood's limited impact in the first Test saw him bowl just 11 overs without taking a wicket during the team's eight-wicket loss in Perth.

After missing the second Test in Brisbane, Wood expressed his disappointment via an Instagram post. "I'm gutted to be out of the remainder of the Ashes. After extensive surgery and seven long, hard months of work, my knee just hasn't held up," he stated, reflecting on his efforts to play a pivotal role.

Matt Fisher, who made his only Test appearance in the Caribbean in 2022, has been called up as cover. Wood, previously England's leading wicket-taker in the 2023 Ashes, acknowledged the challenge ahead and rallied teammate morale: "I still believe we can turn things around. Never give in. Come on England."

News of Wood's withdrawal coincides with Australia's confirmation that veteran paceman Josh Hazlewood will also miss the series due to hamstring and Achilles injuries and will be replaced by Pat Cummins. *—PTI*

## INDIA'S 1ST TRANSGENDERS' FOOTBALL LEAGUE KICKS OFF

**JAMSHEDPUR, 9 DEC**

In a landmark moment for Indian football, the first Transgenders' League commenced on Sunday, featuring seven teams in a five-a-side format, under the Jamshedpur Super League (JSL). The participating teams are Jamshedpur FT, Chaibasa FC, Chakradharpur FC, Jamshedpur Indranagar FC, Naomundi FC, Saraikela FC, and Kolhan Tiger FC.

Initially set to host four teams, the tournament

expanded to include three more due to enthusiastic participation. In the inaugural matches, Jamshedpur FT triumphed over Chaibasa FC 7-0, Kolhan Tiger FC defeated Chakradharpur FC 3-0, while Jamshedpur Indranagar FC and Naomundi FC ended their match in a goalless draw.

For Jamshedpur FT's Puja Soy, scoring four goals on opening day marked a significant step in her journey as a footballer: "For the first time, I felt like I wasn't being seen for my gender, but for my game," she shared. Fellow player Aliya added, "This is the first time we are playing in a proper professional environment." Pyari Hessa, captain of Jamshedpur FT, expressed gratitude for the initiative. *—PTI*

**BEEF WITH COACH?**

# *Liverpool drops Salah from Champions League amid rift*

**LIVERPOOL, 9 DEC**

Mohamed Salah has been omitted from Liverpool's squad for their crucial Champions League match against Inter Milan, amid tensions following his public criticism of the club. Coach Arne Slot confirmed that the only communication with the forward was to inform him he would not be making the trip to Italy.

Salah expressed discontent after being benched for three consecutive games, stating it "seems like the club has thrown me under the bus," and lamenting a lack of relationship with Slot. In response, Slot remarked, "That's not the way I feel, but he has the right to feel how he feels things," indicating his surprise at Salah's comments.

Liverpool's inconsistent form has raised the stakes for this match, as a win could propel them back into contention for a top eight seeding. Meanwhile, in other fixtures, Barcelona aims to bounce back at home against Eintracht Frankfurt after a heavy defeat to Chelsea.

Salah expressed discontent after being benched for 3 games **PHOTO: X**

Chelsea itself visits Atalanta, while Bayern Munich looks to secure a fifth group stage victory against Sporting Lisbon.

Tottenham faces Slavia Prague, and Atletico Madrid takes on PSV Eindhoven. In an early kickoff, Kazakhstan's Kairat Almaty hosts Greece's Olympiacos in a rare 15.30 GMT clash.

Salah, who has enjoyed significant success at Anfield, is set to join the Egypt national team for the upcoming Africa Cup of Nations before the January transfer window opens.

Slot emphasised that the recent fallout did not necessarily signify the end of Salah's time at the club. *—PTI*

### Alcaraz and tennis stars compete at loanDepot Park

**MIAMI, 9 DEC**

Carlos Alcaraz enthralled fans at the inaugural Miami Invitational, the first tennis event held at loanDepot Park, home of Major League Baseball's Miami Marlins. The world No. 1 men's tennis player received a warm welcome from the crowd, showcasing his prowess in a thrilling exhibition match on Monday night.

Alcaraz triumphed over the 24th-ranked João Fonseca, winning 7-5, 2-6, 10-8 in their first encounter. Women's stars Amanda Anisimova and Jessica Pegula also featured, with Anisimova defeating Pegula 6-2, 7-5, before Alcaraz and Pegula clinched victory in a mixed doubles tie-break.

"I just expect that the people are going to get entertained by watching us play," said Alcaraz prior to the match. "I think it's unusual watching us play in these kinds of stadiums. I'm really excited about playing here with João."

Having concluded the 2025 season as ATP's year-end No. 1, Alcaraz expressed enthusiasm for the exhibition season: "I'm having a lot of fun. It's exciting."

The crowd included Inter Miami stars Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, celebrating recent MLS success. *—PTI*